

The Accuser of the Brethren Cast Down and Overcome

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, May 27, 1860

"And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony: and they loved not their lives unto the death." Rev. 12:10, 11

Unfulfilled prophecy has occupied the thoughts and been the subject of much attention on the part of many preachers and writers in this day of widespread profession. And I must confess myself that I think it is scarcely possible for a person with an enlightened eye to read the Old Testament prophecies without seeing that many glorious things spoken therein concerning the Church of God have not yet had their strict and entire fulfilment. There was a time, indeed, in years gone by, when my mind seemed drawn to this subject, and when I took some pleasure in paying attention to it. But for the last four or five and twenty years I have felt my mind drawn from such matters by several considerations, which have weighed with some power upon my conscience. First, I have seen that the exercised family of God, especially the poor of the flock, have paid little attention to subjects of this nature; that they have not formed a part of their teaching from above, or been wrought in their experience by the power of God. I have seen also that when ministers have pursued these subjects with any degree of earnestness—and they are very attractive to certain minds not weighted by trials and afflictions—they have been drawn aside from the firm, solid ground of experimental truth to deal more in

matters of speculation, and have thus left the power for the form, and the Spirit for the letter. I have moreover seen and felt that these subjects, though in themselves very great and glorious, are little adapted to a time of sickness and affliction; that what we then want is the presence of God felt in our soul, the blood of Christ sprinkled upon our conscience, the love of God shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Ghost, and clear testimonies and bright, indubitable evidences of our own interest in the finished work of the Son of God. As, then, these matters of gracious experience, in which not only all the life and power of vital godliness, but all hope of salvation itself depends and centres, press with weight and force upon the conscience, we are led to pay to them more undivided attention, and to feel that they must be our all in all. If a person were to offer me two bags, and say, "Here is a bag of silver for you and here is a bag of gold," I might not despise the silver; I might say, "I thank you very kindly for the offer of the silver bag: it is good coin; but I prefer the gold, though not a quarter the size, for there is more weight, substance, and, above all, more value in it." Thus, though I do not disregard and cast utterly out such subjects as are spoken of in the prophets and the Book of Revelation, which I see looming in the distant future, and to have, as such, a glory of their own, yet I want, for my own soul's need, something closer, nearer, more wrought into my very heart; a vital, personal, individual experience of love and blood, grace and truth, presence and power, manifestation and revelation; in a word, of Christ and his salvation, tasted, handled, felt, and enjoyed. At such seasons, which may come soon, and which must come sooner or later, I shall not want my thoughts occupied with subjects that I might understand merely with my brain and speculate upon as pure matters of opinion, but those vital realities and heaven-sent blessings which shall support my soul in sinking moments, and bear me safe through the

swellings of Jordan.

But, apart from these thoughts and feelings which embody the result of my own experience on this subject, in reading the Prophets, I see not merely glorious things spoken of the Church of God which will no doubt have their fulfilment at the appointed time, such as the conversion of the Jews and the millennial reign of peace; but I realise in these very unfulfilled prophecies an experimental meaning. I feel that the Church of God is already in a spiritual possession of the very blessings predicted; for I have no idea of a carnal millennium; of a peace distinct from the peace of God which "passeth all understanding;" or of a prosperity in which the soul does not live under his smile. I cannot here enlarge, but simply throw this out that you may see that I am not one of those interpreters of the word, who see in it visions of future glory distinct from the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and a dispensation of blessings different from such as are now communicated to the church by the Holy Ghost. So without professing any large or peculiar measure of divine light, I can also see experimental things couched in the descriptions given in the Prophets both of the future sufferings and the future deliverances of the church of God. Take, for instance, the words before us. I have no doubt that as written by the pen of John through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, there was some prospective reference in them to events which certainly then had not taken place; say, for instance, the sufferings of the martyrs under the Roman emperors. This, then, when written, was unfulfilled prophecy, and was fulfilled when the martyrs overcame all accusations and all sufferings by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony. But under this external surface, inside this shell (shall I call it?) of once unfulfilled prophecy, I find something experimental, suitable, sweet, and precious not only then but now; not only for the outward martyrs but for the inward martyrs: not only for the fighters and conquerors

of the second and third centuries, but of the nineteenth, and till time itself shall be no more. And in this way, with God's blessing, I shall treat our subject this morning: neglecting,—not despising, but for a moment neglecting the more literal explanation of it as indicative of a then unfulfilled event, and preferring, as more suitable and profitable, to dwell upon those personal and experimental matters that seem to my mind to spring up directly from the words of the text. In so doing let me call your attention to three main features which seem to me to stand forward very prominently in it:

I.—First, the description that God has given of the "*accuser of the brethren*," and especially as stamping upon him this character, that he "*accused them before our God day and night*."

II.—Secondly, that this accuser of the brethren was *cast down and overcome*, the Holy Ghost blessedly adding the three ways by which the brethren were enabled to come off more than conquerors: *the blood of the Lamb, the word of their testimony, and their martyr spirit*, the last weapon being indicated by the words that "*they loved not their lives unto the death*."

III.—Thirdly, *the shout of triumph*, heard in consequence in the very courts of heaven, "*Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ*."

I.—The "accuser of the brethren," beyond all doubt, is Satan. We find him thus introduced in various parts of God's word, as, for instance, in the opening of the book of Job, where he comes to accuse Job before God as serving the Lord merely for the temporal benefits that had been bestowed upon him, and insinuating that if God put forth his hand and touched his

substance or touched his person, he would manifest that he was not what he was generally taken to be, one who feared him above all other men, but that he would curse God to his face. Now, as regards this personal accusation of the saints represented in our text by the words "before our God," we can hardly think that Satan has admission into the very courts of bliss, there in the highest heavens to accuse personally the saints; for we read of "the celestial city which descended out of heaven from God" that "there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth or that worketh abomination, or maketh a lie." (Rev. 21:10, 27.) How, then, can the worker of all abomination, the great lover and maker of lies, find access into the courts of heaven? If nothing can enter there which defileth, how can the head defiler, the defiler in chief, the foul fiend of all iniquity, who is ever seeking to defile the imagination, pollute the lips, and stain the life of the saints of God, and to fill the world with blood and crime, obtain access there? How can we believe for a single moment that he can pass the borders of heaven and come into the immediate presence of God, who is holiness itself? But you will say that it is so represented in Job and the last chapter of 1 Kings. I quite admit that; but I believe that it is represented so to our faith; it is to bring the subject more clearly and vividly before our mind, and impress it with greater power upon our soul. Thus, in our text, the accuser of the brethren is spoken of as accusing them before God: not that he went into the very presence of God, into heaven itself, where Jesus now rules and reigns at the right hand of the Father; that *there* he stood before the throne of God and the Lamb, and *there*, pointing his finger to the saints of God upon earth, kept accusing them day and night, as if he himself were always in heaven seeing the face of Jehovah, of the various crimes he could lay to their charge. Surely, amidst the music of saints and the songs of angels, there is not heard the screech of devils. I can no more believe this

than I can believe there will be heard in heaven in the day of the grand jubilee, the blasphemies of the lost mingling with the praises of the saved. But in accusing them before God, Satan is represented mystically, this being above all others a mystical book and full of figures and emblems, as accusing them where the presence of God is especially felt, and where everything lies naked and open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do. In this sense he accuses them "before" or in the presence of God. And as the conscience is the place where the presence of God is peculiarly felt in the matter of accusation, it is in the court of conscience that the accuser of the brethren accuses them before God day and night. Thus, as the Lord searches the heart by his Spirit and grace, lays open and bare before his eye every secret crevice and corner, and this is, so to speak, the battle-field where the grand contest, the fight of faith for eternal life, is fought and won, we may say that in accusing them before our God day and night, it is in the court of conscience, in that place where the presence and power of God are sensibly felt, that this accuser of the brethren lays his weighty charges.

1. But this accuser of the brethren must have some real and substantial, some true and well-grounded, accusations to bring, or his charges would fall to the ground at once, or after a short investigation. If I were to accuse a man of any crime, unless there were some foundation for my accusation, it would fall back upon my own head, and I should be branded as a base calumniator of an innocent person. So if Satan had no ground to go upon, his accusations would at once fall back upon his own head; he would have no place on which he could stand, but be at once put out of court. That which gives Satan such power as an accuser in our conscience, and makes his accusations to be so telling is, that there is truth in them; and our conscience, so far as it is made and kept alive and tender in the fear of God, is

compelled, necessarily compelled, to fall under the accusations laid to our charge. To bring the matter more clearly and vividly before your eyes, let me represent how the believing soul, under divine teaching, stands before God in prayer and supplication in its solemn approaches to the throne. Now as in the book of Zechariah (3:1), when Joshua stood before the Lord, Satan stood at his right hand to resist him; so sometimes in a measure it is in our approaches to the throne of grace. Satan stands at our right hand to resist us; and the way he resists us is by bringing accusations, which sometimes from the reality, and sometimes from the appearance of truth, we in our own strength have no power to repel. When, for instance, he accused Joshua of being "clothed in filthy garments," Joshua could not deny the charge: the filthy garments were actually at that very moment upon him. He had but to look down, and the garments themselves hung all round him as so many undeniable present witnesses to the truth of the charge. So if Satan brings against you, in the court of conscience, such and such sins, such and such slips and falls, such and such backslidings as committed by you, your own conscience bears witness to the truth of the charge; and it is this which gives the accusation such power and such pungency. Or take a child of grace under the first teachings of God, drawing near to the throne under a feeling sense of guilt; the dreadful curse of the law raging as a fire in his bones; the anger of God reflected upon his conscience as a consuming fire; the terrors of hell setting themselves in array against him, and the fears of death, the very king of terrors, standing up before his eye as so many gaunt spectres to usher in his fearful doom. But how, it may be asked, does Satan accuse this trembling sinner, and how are we to distinguish between his accusations and those of the law and of conscience? That he does accuse him is most certainly true, for he accuses day and night, that is, continually. But the way in which he

accuses is this. He adds to all the weight and force of a condemning law and an accusing conscience, by representing in the blackest light the sins and crimes of which that trembling one has been guilty. He makes the case out to be as bad, as desperate, and as hopeless as he possibly can. And in the old state trials, before England had won her present liberties, the counsel for the crown always stated the case against the prisoner in the strongest language and painted his imputed treason in the blackest colours, endeavouring, by force or fraud, to secure his conviction; so Satan, as the accuser of the brethren, in seeking to condemn a guilty soul, will ever bring forward the blackest facts and represent them before the eyes in the darkest colours. All the sins that you may have committed from infancy upward; every crime that you may have been guilty of before you were called by grace, and every slip and fall that you may have made since; all these he will bring before your eyes and accuse you with as utterly unpardonable, so that it shall seem at times as though you must sink under their dreadful guilt and burden, and scarcely lift up your eyes to heaven to beg for mercy. And not only whilst under the law, when there is nothing before the eyes but death and terror, but even after the Lord has been pleased to favour the soul with some good hope in his mercy, or with some manifestation of his pardoning love and grace, and some inward testimony of a personal interest in the blood of the Lamb, Satan will not even then cease his accusations. He will accuse of hypocrisy, of insincerity, of deceit; that what the soul felt and handled and tasted in these seasons was not of God, was merely an ebullition of nature, arose from excitement, or delusion, or something that was not a divine reality. And if in an hour of temptation, we have been betrayed into any slip or fall; if Satan, by spreading a suitable snare, has gained the victory over us, and we have had to fall down before God with a cry in our heart, "Unclean, unclean! guilty, guilty, before thee!"

how then will he add all the weight of his charges and accusations, and how the accuser of the brethren, who knows neither mercy nor pity, will press home the charge that he may sink the soul into utter despair.

2. But he is said to accuse them "before our God *day and night*;" that is, incessantly, and more by night than by day; for it is in the night season, when all is still and solemn, that Satan seems to have special access to the mind. In the day, the distractions of business, or worldly occupation, may seem for a time to draw the mind away from the things of God, and then Satan has not the same power as in those seasons when the world has for a time dropped its hold upon the attention, and business and occupation no longer press. Have you not sometimes waked up in the middle of the night with such gloom over your mind, such distress in your soul, such doubt, and guilt, and fear, that you could scarcely explain or account for; it may be terrified with horrid dreams, in one of which you have, as you dreamt, committed some dreadful sin, and wake up in guilt and alarm under its pressure? This Job felt, ascribing his dreams to God, as not seeing they came from Satan. "When I say, my bed shall comfort me, my couch shall ease my complaint; then thou scarest me with dreams, and terrifiest me through visions, so that my soul chooseth strangling, and death rather than life." (Job 7:13, 14, 15.) How Satan in these dark seasons, when night and silence thicken the gloom, will press home his charges, accusing of insincerity, hypocrisy, deceit, and delusion, and of anything and everything but what he knows to be true. For he, as the unwearied adversary, as the great accuser of the brethren, has false charges to bring as well as real. He can accuse of hypocrisy, when the heart is hating the very thought of it; of insincerity, when God has planted his fear deep within for the very purpose of making it right before him; of infidelity, blasphemy, of sinning against the Holy

Ghost—sins which of all others the regenerated soul most abhors and from which it is really most free. But as the seeds of all these sins are in us and their workings felt, Satan acts on these seeds and these workings, warming them as it were into life as the serpent's eggs, and then fathers these crawling reptiles on our regenerate heart. He thus accuses us of all these sins, as though, by feeling them, we had consented to them, and as if they spontaneously emanated from us, as our own cherished and indulged children, when all the while they are but hatched on the dunghill of our nature by his own infernal breath, and might scarcely have life to crawl, bite, or sting, unless he had brooded over them to hatch them from the egg. Thus sometimes, by true charges and sometimes by false; sometimes by taking advantage of us in the hour of temptation to cast down into a snare, and sometimes embracing the opportunity of the guilt and despondency gendered by the slipping into it, to press the accusation of the very evil that he has led us into, does this accuser of the brethren accuse the saint before the throne of God day and night? You may indeed not have been able to trace whence these accusations came; and in fact it is very difficult to distinguish between the accusations of the law, of your own conscience, of the wrath of God, of the witness within of your own guilt and shame, and those accusations that Satan brings as the accuser of the brethren. As in a crowd, where there is a hubbub of voices, it is hard to distinguish one voice from another; so in the confusion that sometimes takes place in the mind, (as Job says, "I am full of confusion,") it is very difficult to distinguish the accusing voice of Satan from the accusing voice of conscience; the despondency that Satan creates by his false charges from that created by the rebukes and frowns of God. So what with the confusion into which the mind is thrown, rendering it unable to distinguish the false from the real, and the force and pungency of those accusations which are true, the

accused soul hardly knows what to say or do, for that which gives the accuser of the brethren such great power, is that he has a witness against us in our own bosom.

II.—But I pass on to show that though the brethren in our text were accused by Satan day and night, and though there were many things in them which gave power and pungency to his accusations, yet the accuser did not prove the victor: *"And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death."* Victory is certain for all the saints of God. They are made more than conquerors through him that loved them. They will come triumphantly out of all charges. The conflict may be fierce, the fight severe and long, but victory is sure in the end.

I. But observe *how* the brethren met the charges. If a man is accused of a crime, the best way to deliver himself from the accusation is clearly to prove his innocence. But what is a man to do if his own conscience be against him, if he be really guilty of the crime laid to his charge? How is he, then, able to prove his innocency? He must then do one of these two things, either confess his crime and cry for free pardon, or he must find an advocate who can undertake his cause, and bring him off in spite of the accusations of his adversary and the condemnation of his own conscience. Now the brethren who were accused by Satan night and day never attempted for a moment to take the first course. They never thought of trying to establish their own righteousness, or to prove their own innocence. They knew well that such a plea would not be available; but any attempt to make it would only cover them with shame; that Satan would in a moment pierce through such armour; that such a sword would be struck out of their hands at the very first blow; that the very judge himself would refuse to receive such a plea; and that

every one in court would cry shame upon the criminal if he attempted to make it. They must, therefore, they knew, turn their eyes in another direction and seek help from another quarter. But looking up, as if in despair of help, they caught a view of the bleeding Lamb, as the Lord Jesus Christ is represented in this very book: "And I beheld and lo, in the midst of the throne, and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain" (Rev. 5:6); and as they thus by faith looked up to the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, they viewed the atoning blood as it fell from his hands and feet and side, and every drop of that blood they saw was infinitely precious, for it had the value and validity of Godhead stamped upon it. Thus viewing the atoning blood of the Lamb, and finding and feeling its efficacy to purge their conscience from guilt, sin, and shame, they pleaded, as though they would say each for himself, "I am guilty, guilty, guilty; in myself I have nothing to plead as being innocent of these heavy charges; so far from that, I freely acknowledge that I deserve to be taken away, bound hand and foot, and cast into outer darkness. The accuser of the brethren has brought for the most part accusations against me which I cannot answer, and though he may have aggravated them or mixed false charges with them, yet in substance they are true. But I turn my eyes away from all hope and help in self, and I view with the eyes of faith the atoning blood of the Lord the Lamb, and there I build my hope. This, then, is my plea—the blood of the Lamb. I have, I wish to have no other." Now this was a plea that Satan could not answer. He knew that Jesus Christ was the Son of God and God. He knew that it had been hung over his head as a declaration against him from the lips of him who cannot lie, when he was in the form of a serpent in the garden of Eden, that "the seed of the woman should bruise his head." He knew that the Son of God was to assume human nature into union with his divine Person, for how else

could the seed of the woman, whom he had so easily beguiled and overcome, crush his head into the dust? And he also well knew, if not before yet certainly after the resurrection, that this was the way of salvation that God had purposed in his dear Son becoming man; and that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin when believingly viewed and experimentally made known. When, therefore, the blood of the Lamb was looked unto and presented before his eyes as an available plea, Satan felt that his accusations must fall to the ground, for here was God's own declaration of justification—the pardon of all the sins alleged against the criminal. In our earthly courts, if the sovereign steps in with a free pardon, the accused is at once released. This, before tyrannical and arbitrary sovereigns abused the privilege and were therefore stripped of it, was frequently the case in this country. But monarchs are but men, and we are therefore compelled to tie their hands lest power should defeat justice, and favouritism shut out merit. But the King of kings does not rule by human laws, and therefore freely pardons all whom he serves.

Still, there was *one thing* wanting. He might say, and does say, as an accuser in the conscience, "It is true, perfectly true, that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin; it is true, beyond all doubt and question, that the saints of God are washed in that blood, and that by his righteousness they are all freely justified from all their sins;" for Satan, to serve his purpose, can preach truth as well as error; can point out the hopeless glories of heaven to desponding saints as well as hide the flames of hell from presumptuous sinners. "But," adds he, "true, most certainly as all this is, has that blood washed, has that glorious righteousness justified *you*? Are *you* a saint of God? If you were, would you have such a heart as you have? so filthy and unclean; so proud, rebellious, and unbelieving? Could you be continually imagining to yourself,

and even indulge those thoughts and feelings, those desires and lusts, of which I accuse you to your face, and which you cannot deny? Would you have slipped and fallen as you have done on this or that occasion? Would you have been betrayed so easily, so that instead of sin tempting you, you rather tempted sin; and instead of my spreading the snare for you, you rather laid it down before your own feet? Would a child of God have acted so? And besides all these marks and evidences against you, what marks have you for you?" Thus, though the child of grace may appeal to atoning blood, yet Satan can meet that plea by saying, "It is true that the blood of Christ cleanses all the saints of God from all sin; but unless you are a saint of God, that blood is of no avail to you. That plea, therefore, cannot save you from my accusations and the wrath of God due for your sins." You see, then, that you want something more than your first plea. You want an evidence in your own bosom that you are a saint of God. Satan keeps telling you that you are a sinner—a sinner doomed to die, whom he will drag to hell, whom he will torment when he has got you there for ever and ever. You have to prove the accusation false, that you are not a lost sinner, but a saved saint. But you must have a witness in the same place where the accusation is; you must have a testimony in your conscience that you are a saint as well as that you are a sinner. Of that you want a clear evidence; and if the Lord is pleased to shed abroad his love in your heart, or sprinkle upon your conscience the atoning blood, or even, without any powerful manifestation, give you a considerable measure of faith, or raise up a sweet hope, or apply a precious word of promise to your heart, this gives you an evidence that though you are a sinner and as such freely own the truth of Satan's accusations, yet you are a saint of God's own making, and that is so far an answer to his charge.

But there is something wanting still: *you must have the*

blood applied. As the high priest took the blood of the bullock and goat and sprinkled it on and before the mercy seat; so the blood of sprinkling must be applied to the conscience, for it speaketh better things than the blood of Abel, which cried to God for vengeance, but this cries to God for mercy. In purging the conscience from guilt, the blood of sprinkling purges it from the accusations of Satan, for they cannot remain when guilt is gone. Nor is there any other way whereby the inward accusation of Satan can be overcome than by a sweet assurance of a personal interest in the atoning blood of Christ, through the precious blood being applied to the conscience and sprinkled by the Holy Ghost upon the heart.

ii. But they had another weapon whereby they fought Satan and overcame him: this was, "*the word of their testimony.*" I understand by this expression two different things. 1, The testimony which the word bears to them; 2, The testimony which they bear to the word. The first is the testimony *from* the word; the second is the testimony *to* the word. Let us examine both:—

1. The word of God, not in the bare letter but as a living testimony from God, had been made life and power to their soul; as the Lord himself speaks, "The flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." (John 6:63.) It is called elsewhere "the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God." Now when the Lord is pleased to apply his word with power to the soul, it becomes "the word of our testimony;" or as it may be rendered, the word of our witness; that is to say, it bears a certain witness for God in the heart. When the sword is put by the power of God into our hands, then we can wield that weapon as given to us by the King of battles, who teacheth our hands to war and our fingers to fight. If ever the Lord has been pleased to

apply a promise, bring home a passage of Scripture, seal upon your heart any word of truth, he has made that portion of his word yours. As in ancient days, when the youthful warrior went into the field, the father took his own sword down from where it hung, and as he put it into his hand, said, "Go forth, my son, with this sword wherewith I once carved my way to victory. It is a true Damascus blade, which will neither break nor bend;" so when the Lord applies a passage to the soul, and brings a passage home with divine power to the heart, he puts the sword of the Spirit into the believer's hand, and by this sword of the Spirit he is enabled to fight with Satan. If there is power put into the word of God when applied to the heart, it becomes ours by the surest and best of all donations, for God has given it to us. We see how the blessed Lord, when tempted of Satan, answered again and again, "It is written! it is written! it is written!" And were not those words given him by his heavenly Father, as he himself speaks, "I have given them the words which thou hast given me?" (John 17:8.) Satan felt the keen edge of that sword and slunk away discomfited. We must follow, as far as enabled, this blessed example. There is no use reasoning with the devil, attempting to outface him and outwit him by carnal argument: he is too great a master of logic to be overcome by such weapons. The word of truth commended to your conscience, the word of God applied to your heart, your having a living faith in it, making a spiritual use of it, holding it up against Satan, sometimes to parry his attacks and sometimes to make him feel the point and edge of that keen sword; thus resist the devil, and he will flee from you. The word of God has wondrous power when it is divinely felt in all trials and conflicts, but in none more than in repelling the assaults of the wicked one. There is no better weapon, for instance, whereby we can meet the accusations of Satan, as referred to in our text, but the word of truth as made life and power to the soul. If God has ever spoken with

power to your soul a word like this, "Go in peace: thy sins are all forgiven thee;" or if he has ever said, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee;" or if ever he has manifested mercy to your soul by the application of any promise to your heart, and in the hour of temptation and accusation brings to mind and memory what he spake in days past, and enables you to take up the sword of the Spirit that may have lain in the scabbard for a while, but which now you are enabled to draw by the hand of faith: then you may engage Satan hand to hand and foot to foot. For this is "the word of your testimony" as being the witness from God in your conscience that he is on your side. Thus, these ancient saints, these blessed martyrs (for of them the Holy Ghost here chiefly speaks), when Satan accused them before God day and night, did not attempt vain reasonings, nor carnal arguments, nor to encounter him by his own weapons of logic and wisdom. They simply used the word of God's grace, the power of which they had felt in their own heart, which they knew had come from God by feeling its effects; and they cut Satan down with the sword of the Spirit, which God had put into their hands—the only weapon that Satan really feels or fears.

2. It thus became the word of their testimony *for* God as it had been made the word of their testimony *from* God. They could now testify to the mercy of God as felt, to his love as experienced, to his grace as made known, to his power as realised, and to his faithfulness as proved; and by testifying for God what they had received from God, they repelled the accusations of Satan by proving to his face that their Sovereign Judge before whom he accused them was their Father and their Friend.

iii. But there was a third weapon wherewith they fought and

whereby they conquered, which I have briefly characterised as a *martyr spirit*, indicated by the words, "and *they loved not their lives unto the death.*" We do not hear of martyrs dragged to the stake in England now as in the days when Popery prevailed. The persecuting spirit smoulders in many breasts, but it has not yet relighted the fires of Smithfield. In foreign climes, however, as in Turkey, Spain, and in Italy, till late events snapped the yoke of king and priest, pope and prelate asunder, persecution drags the witnesses for Christ to loathsome prisons and deprives them if not of life, of life's chief treasure—liberty. But in our country, in this favoured isle, persecution in these open violent forms has ceased for many years, and we freely enjoy those civil and religious liberties, for they stand or fall together, which our suffering forefathers won. But, though outward martyrdom has ceased, there are inward martyrs. Stake and bonfire, hot pincers and thumbscrews, rack and torture are not used now; and fines and imprisonment for religious belief the spirit of the times will not suffer. The scourge of the tongue is now wielded instead of the scourge on the back, the character is branded instead of the forehead, and they cut off reputations instead of cutting off ears. But there are other martyrs besides those who have died at the stake and languished in prisons. Hart beautifully says:—

"See the suffering Church of Christ,
Gathered from all quarters:
All contained in that red list,
Were not murdered martyrs."

There is an inward as well as an outward martyrdom—a torture of soul as well as a torture of the body; and in this sense all the people of God are martyrs. Nor has the martyr spirit ceased, any more than the martyr feeling. And if we are to have our portion among the martyrs who yielded up

their lives at the stake, and died in earthly torment, we must carry in our bosom a martyr spirit, and have the same feeling though we have not to endure the same fate. This martyr spirit is expressed by the words "They loved not their lives unto the death." They freely parted with their lives sooner than deny the blessed Lord, or yield to the accusations and suggestions of Satan. Naturally they loved their lives as men must love them. But they did not love their lives so as to love them more than salvation, more than grace, more than the gospel for which they bled, and more than the Lord who died for them. When death presented itself in its most terrible and appalling forms they did not say, "I must, I will save my life. O death, I fear thee! Sooner than die by cruel tortures, I will betray my Lord, and give up all my religion. Life is so sweet to me and death so terrible, that sooner than die I will renounce all I have professed to believe, and will say, do, and be anything you wish." The martyr spirit in their bosom prevented such a betraying of Christ as that, whatever might await them in the shape of death. Then you must have the same martyr spirit in your heart, though not displayed in the same way, be willing to suffer for Christ's sake, though not to be thrown to the wild beasts like the ancient Christians, or die at the stake as our English martyrs. Come what will, come what may, to feel a holy determination in Christ's strength, not your own, never to give up the truth of God; but feeling it dear to your soul, to hold it with all the power that God may give, so that nothing shall ever tear it away from your breast, even though life itself be at stake. If a man has ever felt the truth of God in his heart as a heavenly blessing; if the mercy, grace, love, presence, and power of God have ever been experienced in his conscience, he will hold these divine realities to be dearer to him than anything else—than wife, or children, or land, or house, or possessions, or name, or fame, or reputation, or character. In favoured moments, when the Lord Jesus Christ is made

precious to his soul, and his truth comes with liberating, sanctifying power into his heart, nothing is so dear to him as the truth of God. Now apply this to Satan's accusations, and see how this martyr spirit of not loving our lives unto the death meets them. It may be that he has accused you, among his other charges, of insincerity and hypocrisy, of delusion, deception; that what you know you merely know in the letter; that what you have felt has been felt only in the flesh; and that what you have received has not been received by the power of God into a believing heart, but naturally and notionally into an enlightened judgment. These insinuations and accusations are very staggering, for there is a measure of truth in them, our carnal mind being really and truly all that Satan accuses us of. But in spite of all this, where the grace of God is in the heart there is an inward determination not to yield to these accusations, but to hold fast by the truth of God and what we have felt of its power, come what will. This is the martyr spirit; for as the martyrs would not give up what they believed at the command of their persecutors, so we will not, and cannot give up what we have believed and felt at the accusations of Satan. This was the martyrs' last stand; here they fought for eternal life; here they resisted unto blood; here they yielded up their breath sooner than deny Christ; and here by dying for Christ they won Christ, for here they proved the truth of his own words, "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." (Matt. 16:25.) In the same spirit must we resist, and by resisting overcome the accusations of Satan. "Hold that fast which thou hast that no man take thy crown," must be our motto and watchword. Have you not at times felt in your bosom that, come what will, you never can forget and never can give up what the Lord has sealed upon your breast with power; that his truth has been at various times made very precious to you; that a measure of his love has been shed abroad in your heart; and

that Christ has discovered himself to your soul as "the chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely?" To this felt experience of the power and truth of God, you look in life and death; upon this blessed Jesus as revealed to your soul you hang your only hope; from this discovery of salvation through his blood and love, you derive your chief consolation in this vale of tears, and in the strength of it, and in the renewed manifestation of it, you hope and wish to die. Christ at hand, not far off; salvation in your soul, not in the bare letter of the word; the work and witness of the Holy Spirit in your conscience, not in the Scriptures only; the presence, the smiles, the pardoning love of God inwardly enjoyed; these divine realities will alone make your death-bed happy. How, then, can you surrender at Satan's call what you have felt, tasted, and handled for yourself of the word of life? Armed in this armour of proof, you can stand against the wiles of the devil. Satan, with all his accusations of slips and falls, darkness, coldness, rebellion, ingratitude, unbelief, and his numerous other pleas, whether true or false, cannot really sustain a single charge against a saint whose heart God has made true and honest, and in whose soul he has wrought by his holy Spirit any measure of gracious, living experience; for he, having the martyr spirit, loves the truth, from what he has known and felt of its power, above everything. And sooner than part with that he will part with his natural life.

Just observe, then, how the saint of God meets Satan when he accuses him before God day and night. Look at the three weapons that God has given him wherewith to fight the accuser of the brethren, and see how, by the use of these three weapons, he comes off more than conqueror. First, he looks to the atoning blood of the Lamb, as shed upon Calvary's tree, revealed to his soul by the power of God as cleansing from all sin, and sprinkled upon his conscience by a

divine operation. He looks to that atoning blood as his chief, his only hope, and under a believing view of it, can say, "Satan, I acknowledge I am a sinner, and one of the worst and vilest, yea, of sinners the very chief; but here I build my hope. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin. I am baser and blacker than you have represented or can represent me, but washed in that precious blood I can stand before God accepted in the beloved." Then he can say, as favoured with faith to employ the second weapon, "Here is the word of God's testimony, the power of which I have felt in my heart. It is God's word, and what God has said must be fulfilled. If God has declared that he has loved me with an everlasting love, that word will stand. If God has assured me, or gives me any sweet evidence, that I am one of his children, his testimony will stand in spite of all your accusations. If the Lord has loved me, has given Himself for me, and has drawn me with cords of love because he has so loved me, his love will stand firm and fast, for those whom he loveth he loveth unto the end, whatever charges may be brought against me of what I am and have been in myself. And as to all else, let all go except what God has done for my soul. Let health, let strength, let property, let substance, let name and fame and character and reputation all go: they are not my life, they are not my hope, they are not my all. Sooner than part with the Lord Jesus Christ, give up my hope and sink in despair,—sooner than do that, I will make my last sacrifice, I will yield up my natural life." Thus by looking to the atoning blood of the Lamb, holding fast the word of God's testimony, and being possessed of a martyr spirit to hold to Christ even though death itself were to ensue,—by these three weapons the saints whom Satan accused before God day and night were able to overcome him; and by these three weapons and the right use of them do the saints overcome him now.

III.—And now, to come to our third and last point, as these martyrs thus spoke and acted, the approbation of God himself sounded from above, "And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven"—as though God himself, witnessing the bloody conflict here below, hearing Satan's accusations and how the saints of God were able to meet and overcome them, spoke from heaven itself with his own approving voice, "*Now is come salvation, and strength*, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night." Whilst they were engaged in the conflict; whilst Satan was accusing and pressing his charges, and they were only just able to meet him with the weapons put into their hand, fighting and struggling as dying men, saving thereby their lives as they were losing them, salvation had not come in all its blessedness, fulness, and power. But when the accuser was cast down; when baffled and defeated and driven out of his attempted conquest he slunk away as a conquered foe, then salvation began to open itself in all its blessed reality, in all its fulness, its certainty, and its glory. It is after temptations, battles, conflicts, and God enabling us to get the victory over them, that the fulness and blessedness of God's salvation are seen. Salvation then becomes a reality—not a mere truth in God's inspired word; not a mere doctrine floating in the brain, or an article of a sound creed written down in the church book; but a solid reality as revealed to the soul by the power of God.

1. "*Now is come salvation*:" as though the believing soul should now say, "Before this conflict, this struggle for life, this fight with Satan, I saw salvation at a distance; but now, O now, salvation is come! It has come into my heart as a blessed reality. I now know that I am saved by the power of God; for Satan, who has been accusing me before the throne day and night in my guilty conscience, in my troubled,

labouring breast, is cast down and cast out; he no longer exercises the same influence and power to harass and distress my soul; my conscience no longer bleeds under his accusations. I have gained the victory through the blood of the Lamb, and now is come salvation in all its blessedness." See, then, the profit you have reaped from these accusations. Not only have they sifted you out of all your false religion and winnowed away the chaff and dust of a mere profession, but, no thanks to Satan, they have been followed with the richest blessing. But for the conflict there would have been no victory, but for the battle no triumph, but for the defeated, flying enemy no erecting of the trophy on the battlefield. It may seem hard to you to have been forced against your will into the battle-field, and have Satan accusing you day and night; but what lessons you have there learnt, lessons to be learnt in no other way! Before, you were a volunteer, learning the goose-step or firing at a target. Now you are a soldier shouting victory over the invading foe. As naturally, so spiritually, how can there be a victory without a battle? But in the spiritual battle we do not fight in our own strength, but in the Lord's; and if this be the case, what can a man know of strength—the strength of Christ made perfect in weakness—who has not been engaged in the battle-field? When Satan accuses, then is felt our weakness, weakness to answer his charges, weakness to fight in this bloody field, and the soul is ready to sink and fall beneath the weight of the accusations. But when the Lord strengthens us to look to the blood of the Lamb, to wield the sword of the Spirit, and endues us with a martyr spirit, then strength comes, strength to fight and strength to win the victory; strength to baffle Satan's accusations, and strength to shout triumph over the retreating foe.

2. *"And the kingdom of our God,"* which is the kingdom of Christ set up in the heart, and righteousness, and peace, and

joy in the Holy Ghost; for Christ then reigns and rules in the soul. When he has cast down Satan, when he has answered his charges, when he has won the victory and defeated the enemy, then "the kingdom of God "comes, as set up in the heart by divine power; that kingdom which is to be erected upon the ruins of all other kingdoms; that kingdom of grace here which will issue in the kingdom of glory hereafter. Must not Christ now be King? Who so fit, who so worthy to reign? Who so worthy to wear the crown of glory? But whilst Satan still accused, the kingdom of Christ though begun was not fully come. Till the stone cut out of the mountain without hands smites the image and makes it like the chaff of the summer threshing floors, it does not become a great mountain to fill the whole earth. (Dan. 2:34, 35.) So till Satan is cast down in the soul as well as in the world the kingdom of Christ is not fully come.

3. And then comes "*the power of his Christ,*" or of his anointed one. Christ has received power at God's right hand to fight our battles and plead our cause; for "all power is given unto him in heaven and in earth." (Matt. 28:18.) And when this power is experimentally put forth to deliver the soul from the accusations of Satan, the shout from heaven is heard, "Now is come the power of his Christ—his power as the anointed King of Zion." Then is felt the power of his blood to cleanse a guilty conscience; the power of his righteousness to justify a needy, naked soul; the power of his love to bring it off more than conqueror; the power of his Spirit to testify within to its adoption and its acceptance. "The power of his Christ" is then experimentally felt when salvation and strength and the kingdom of God are fully come. And all these are fully come when the accuser is cast down and victory obtained by the blood of the Lamb.

It is, then, through these trials, temptations, and conflicts

that we come into the experience and drink into the spirit of vital godliness. As long as you are unexercised in your soul, have no accusations of Satan, no temptations without or conflicts within, you do not experimentally know the weight and power of vital godliness, the realities of true religion, and the treasures of love and grace locked up in the Person and work of the Son of God, and revealed in the gospel of his grace. But put you in the battle-field; let your soul hang trembling in the balance; let Satan come in as the accuser of the brethren, and you sink into guilt, fear, and despondency: then you will want something more than a notional, natural faith and a little outside, superficial coat of religion. You will want salvation spoken to your heart, strength communicated to your soul, the kingdom of God set up in your breast, and the power of his Christ made known in your conscience. And if favoured with the enjoyment of these divine realities after a season of anxiety and sorrow, you will see the goodness of God in putting you into the furnace, in suffering Satan to accuse you day and night, that when he is cast down and overcome, the kingdom of God might come in its blessed fulness, and be set up and established with more power and life and unction in your heart. It seems very discouraging to many a dear child of God to be exercised with guilt and temptation, and to have Satan whispering these horrible charges. But when the soul is enabled by the power of God to fight him with the weapons that God has appointed, and which he puts into his hand; and when through his all-sufficient and all-conquering grace, victory is gained, and salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of God, and the power of his Christ are come, then there is felt to be a solemn reality in true religion that no heart before could conceive or tongue express. Thus the favoured among you in this congregation are not those who are at ease in Zion. It is not those who are at peace with sin and Satan that are the highly favoured, but those in the battle-field, fighting hand to

hand with the accuser of the brethren, often cast down, but never really overcome, struggling hard, and at times despairing even of life, yet holding on their way and in the end obtaining the victory.

I leave it in the hand of the Lord to apply to your heart what I have spoken in his name, that it may be a searching word to some and a comforting word to others; that it may pull down the mighty from their seat and exalt the humble and meek; that it may be a means in the hand of God to convince some poor professor of the emptiness of his religion, or of dropping consolation into the conscience of a troubled saint; that, with the help of God, it may bring down as well as build up; and that I may thus be the mouth of God, as well as the servant of God, and speak words that the Holy Ghost may crown with his approbation and his favouring smile.