

THE ETERNAL REFUGE

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"The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee: and shall say. Destroy them." Deuteronomy 33:27

We were considering this morning, a passage (Ex. 33:16), which came from the lips of Moses very shortly after the children of Israel had entered into the wilderness: and the words which I have just read issued also from the same lips forty years afterwards, shortly before Moses closed his eyes, and entered into everlasting rest. But do we perceive the strain altered? Do we find that forty years further experience had made a difference in the doctrine that Moses believed, and in the blessings that Moses enjoyed? Did a longer experience of his own backslidings, and of the idolatry of the people committed to his charge, give him a better opinion of human nature? Did it alter the deep conviction, which he doubtless had before, that man's heart was "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked?" Or did God's mercies and blessing, displayed for forty years, lead him to depreciate, to under-estimate, to form a less idea of what superabounding grace was, than he felt forty years before? I venture to say, that not only had his experience been enlarged downwards, but enlarged also upwards; that he not only had a deeper sense of man's ruin and misery, but also a higher and more abounding sense of the riches of God's grace. He was not like some preachers, such as the late Dr. Ryland and Rowland Hill, who began Calvinists and ended Arminians; or, if they did not end in Arminianism, were not much further from it than Eden-street from Tottenham-Court-Road. **Not a**

hundred yards. No, he died as he lived, in the sweet enjoyment and blessed testimony that salvation was of grace from first to last: and, almost with expiring breath, he traced all the mercies that were showered down upon the people of God to the eternal covenant settlements, and he looked forward into eternity, as though that would be the only termination, if termination it can be called, of the original source of God's mercy and love. "The eternal God." says he, with expiring breath. "is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee: and shall say. Destroy them." Not a word here of creature merit, not a syllable of human righteousness. not a single iota of what **they** were to do in the matter, but the eternal God was to be "all in all."

We will, then, with God's blessing, look at this passage, which this man of God breathed forth, for the comfort and encouragement of the church of God in all times, ages, and dates, and we will consider the words in the order that they lie before us.

I. "The eternal God is thy refuge." We will look at the last word first, "**Refuge!**" What does "refuge" imply? It implies escape. We hear of "harbours of refuge," that is havens and ports along an iron-bound coast, which were either originally constructed by the hand of God, or else, in later days, by the hand of man, for the purpose of affording ships an escape from the coming storm. Again, we have the idea still more plainly conveyed to us in a Scriptural figure. You are, of course, familiar with the expression, which occurs in Numbers (Num. 35:11), and also in Joshua (Josh. 20:2), "the cities of refuge." There were certain cities belonging to the Levites, which were set apart, six on one side of Jordan, and six on the other, where the man-slayer was to flee, who had slain a person unawares, that he might be safe there from

the sword of the avenger of blood and next of kin to the person whom he had unwittingly slain. Now, both these figures give to us this idea a place of escape, a spot of safety, a harbour where we may take shelter and find security from some coming danger, or some threatening enemy.

Having seen, then, a little of the idea contained in the word "refuge," we will look at the various refuges which men devise for themselves. It seems that there is in man's conscience, by nature, some intimations, very dark and feeble, but still some intimations of a God, of a judgment to come, of a heaven to be obtained, and a hell to be feared. These convictions work with more or less power in men's minds: some men, it appears, know but little of natural convictions. I think Mr. Huntington, in one of his writings, mentions a man, who told him that he never had had one conviction of sin in all his life, which he said he could scarcely believe. No doubt cases, however, do occur in which men pass through life, and drop into an awful eternity, who have never had one conviction of sin until they are plunged into the billows of everlasting despair. But many, if not most men, have, before the conscience becomes seared as with a hot iron, not spiritual convictions, mark you! issuing in gospel deliverance and gospel blessings, but such workings of natural conscience, as the apostle speaks of in Rom. 2:15, "Their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another."

Now, when these natural convictions work in a man's mind, they set him to seek some escape from them. He is like a mariner, who, when he sees the storm brewing in the horizon, flees to harbour, that he may escape from it. These natural convictions, then, working in men's minds, put them upon thinking how they may escape from them. And they

resort to various means. Some, in order to escape the pungent convictions at work in their minds, plunge headlong into sin. They are determined to get rid of them, and, with daring rebellion, rush into sin as the Gadarene swine into the sea. And I think we have this intimated in the passage, "Thou saidst, There is no hope; no; for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go" (Jer. 2:25). Conviction produces a sense of despair, and that being unbearable by the natural mind, the man plunges into sin, in order to drown and get rid of it. That is one refuge, and a most desperate refuge it is. Others plunge headlong into infidelity, to escape conviction of sin; they get hold of sceptical publications, attend infidel spouters, and soon drink down the damnable doctrines of infidelity. And there is in the human heart by nature, such a spirit of infidelity, that very soon it gains a complete hold of the mind, and forms there a miserable and impregnable refuge, until they learn in hell, with the devils, to "believe and tremble." But the majority fly to works. Legality, self-will, self-righteousness, and human merit, are a part of that "folly" which is "bound up in the heart of a child." Our nature can never understand and can never relish anything but human merit and freewill.

Now, this being the case, when the conscience is alarmed with convictions of sin. good works are at once fled to. It is the most natural, the most easy, and the most simple refuge. Others. again, who have sprung from professing parents, or have sat for some time under an enlightened ministry, are convinced, in their judgment, that works cannot save them. That doctrine has been drilled into them from infancy: and therefore, by the natural information of their understandings, they do not flee to works, for they know that it is of no use to do so: but they flee to a profession, to a sound creed, to ensconce themselves in some religious nook, and hide themselves in some doctrinal refuge, that they may persuade

themselves—and you know that man's deceitful heart loves to be persuaded to believe a lie—that they may persuade themselves that, because they have embraced the truth in the judgment, they have all the blessings and all the mercies connected with an experimental reception of the truth. And I believe that this is the grand refuge of hypocrites, self-deceivers, and dead professors in our day.

What is the religion of the present day? It is an imitation; and you know that every imitation must bear some resemblance to the original. The forged bank note, the counterfeit sovereign, bears some resemblance to the good note, to the legitimate coin. This aping mimicry, then, of the present day, imitates true religion in two points, which are the two leading features of a gracious experience—a work of the law upon the conscience to convince of sin, and a gospel deliverance to persuade the soul of its interest in mercy. Notional convictions mimic the work of the law, and a reception of Calvinism and of the doctrines of grace into the judgment, apes a gospel deliverance: so that, equipped by the devil and by the deceit of their own heart, with an imitation of the work of the law and a mimicry of the work of the gospel, they go forth accomplished counterfeits; and make this their refuge, when God knows it is nothing but a refuge of lies.

The Lord will never let his people hide themselves in a lying refuge, whether this or any other. They all gladly would do so if they dared. If any of you have been brought out of a refuge of lies, there are no thanks due to you. I am sure that you hid your head in it as long as you could: I am sure that when God pulled you out of it, it was the last thing you wished to be done for you, and the last thing you desired to be done in you. You resisted. I fully believe. To be stripped of your religion was like having the skin stripped off your

bones: as Job says. "I am escaped with the skin of my teeth." But God has said in Isa. 28:17-18, of those who have "made a covenant with death, and with hell an agreement:" **and these. I believe, are his own people** that their "covenant with death shall be disannulled, and their agreement with hell shall not stand, for the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place." But God's people never get into the true refuge till they have been beaten out of all false ones. They are like a ship at sea, which, when the storm comes on, will often try every shift before it runs into harbour. It will reef its sails, or take in every thread of canvas, or beat up to windward, and bear in its own strength all the pitiless pelting of wind and waves rather than run into port. And so God's people will often bear in their own strength the storm of the law before they flee for refuge to the hope set before them in the gospel. But, after they have tried every means, and find all ineffectual to keep their ship from sinking, how glad they are, at last, by God's mercy and grace, to take on board the unerring Pilot, who steers them into the harbour of eternal safety.

We see that Moses, speaking here by the Holy Ghost, lays a very great stress on the word "**thy.**" Luther, I believe, says somewhere that all the marrow of vital godliness, and all the honey and honeycomb of Scriptural truth, lie in the little words, "Me" and "Thee," "My" and "Thy", and so on. Thus Moses lays a great stress on the word "Thy:—The eternal God is **Thy** refuge." It is as though he had said, The heathen nations all around you have their refuges: but thy refuge is a refuge different from theirs, one peculiar to thyself; one which no one else knows anything about, into which no one can enter, and in which none will be found but thyself. Quarrel with it as men may, it is in the peculiarity of the

mercies, which God's people receive that their blessedness mainly consists.

But he tells us who this refuge is: "**The eternal God** is thy refuge." To my mind, there is much sweetness in the contrast betwixt the eternal God being the refuge of his people, and the lying refuges that most hide their heads in. God's people want **an eternal** refuge. They have a never-dying soul: and unless they have a never-dying refuge, it is not sufficient for a never-dying soul. Works! these are for time: the never-dying soul wants something to stand when works and workers cease. Doctrines, opinions, sentiments, ordinances, the good opinion of men, the applause and flattery of the creature—these are of the earth, earthy: they fail when a man gives up the ghost. But a child of God wants a refuge, not merely that his soul may anchor in it in time, but that when time is ended, when the angel proclaims "That there should be time no longer," and his liberated soul escapes its prison-house, and is wafted into the presence of the eternal God, it may find in him at that solemn moment a refuge. Nay, all through eternity, in the rolling circuit of its never-ending ages, the soul will still want a refuge. For could it even in eternity exist for a moment out of Christ—in a word, were the refuge of the elect anything but eternal, the moment the limited time of their shelter closed, the frowns of God would hurl them into perdition; so that nothing but an eternal God can ever be a refuge for a never-dying soul. It does not say, "His grace is thy refuge." No; because grace will end in glory. Nor does it say, "His mercy is thy refuge," for his mercy will end in blessing and praise. Nor does it say, "His attributes or his perfections are a refuge." It drops the gifts and leads the soul up to the Giver, as though God's own gifts and mercies were not sufficient, but that the immortal soul must have the immortal God, and the never-dying spirit is only safe in the bosom of an eternal Jehovah.

By the word "immortal," we are also reminded, not only of eternity to come, but of what divines call "eternity past;" for we cannot limit the word "eternal" merely to what God **is to be** to his people, but must include what God **ever has been** to them. The "eternal God," then, ever was, as well as ever will be, the refuge of his people. The refuge began **if we may use the word begin** before all time; for it began in the everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure. The eternal Father, the eternal Son, and the eternal Spirit, three eternal Persons in one eternal Godhead, were, are, and ever will be the eternal refuge to the Church of God; and all the attributes of the three Persons of the Trinity will be glorified in the people of God enjoying this eternal refuge. The eternal electing love of the Father, the eternal, justifying, redeeming, and atoning work of the Son, and the quickening, comforting, upholding, and teaching of the Holy Spirit, are all wrapped up in that one expression—the eternal God.

But must there not be some experience of these truths in the soul? However well we may be persuaded of the truth of these things in our head, will that satisfy you and me? It will not satisfy me, I am sure. Nothing short of the vital experience, the divine application, and the spiritual manifestation of these blessed truths, under the solemn unction and powerful preaching of the Holy Ghost in the conscience, will ever satisfy a fainting spirit. But, if a man has never known what it is to be hunted out of house and home, if he has never had his refuges of lies broken up, if he has never had the bed too short and the covering too narrow, stripped away from under him; if he has never stood naked and needy, helpless and hopeless, before the eye of offended Justice, what can he know experimentally of a refuge, of hiding himself in God, of fleeing to him, as David says, "I flee unto Thee to hide me;" and burying, so to

speaking, himself in the mercy and love of God poured down into his heart, and richly streaming into, and divinely covering and encompassing his soul?

II. "**And underneath are the everlasting arms.**" What, eternity again? Could not Moses be satisfied with telling us only once about eternity? It is sometimes thrown in the teeth of experimental ministers that they are always harping upon the same truths. "O," say some, "They have only about half a dozen tunes, which they play over again and again, for that is the sum total of their music." Does not Moses twice harp on one string? Does he not, in playing his "harp of solemn sound," again strike the same note? He does not think it irksome, having spoken of the **eternal** God, to repeat the expression; but he goes on to say, "Underneath are the **everlasting** arms." But what is the meaning of this expression? Generally speaking, we best gather the meaning of promises by looking at their contrast. Promises are always suited to certain circumstances; by looking therefore at the circumstances we can sometimes gather the spiritual meaning of the promises. For instance, if the Lord promise bread, "bread shall be given him" (Isa. 33:16): by looking at hunger we gather a clearer view of what is meant by that promise. If the Lord promise a justifying robe, "I will clothe thee with change of raiment" (Zech. 3:4), by considering what nakedness implies (Hos. 2:3), we see the propriety and suitableness of that promise. When the Lord says he is a refuge, by seeing the danger and destruction to which that promise is applicable, we gather a sweeter view and a clearer knowledge of what is conveyed by the expression. Thus, when it says, "Underneath are the everlasting arms," in order to enter into the beauty, the sweetness, and the suitability of the expression, we must look at the state of the soul as needing everlasting arms to be placed underneath it. The idea implied is that of falling. The arms are not put above to

keep the soul from rising, but underneath to keep it from falling.

Unless, then, a man knows experimentally what it is to be a poor fallen creature, and such a fallen creature that he cannot move one step of the way alone, such a helpless wretch, that, like a poor paralytic child, he must be carried in arms through the whole of his journey; if he does not know something of that experience in his soul, he has yet to learn the meaning of the everlasting arms being **underneath**. When the Lord shews his people what they really are, he puts an end to all the boasting of the creature. When he brings his holy law with power into their conscience, and opens up the deep corruptions of their fallen nature, he convinces them that, if they are to be saved, they must be saved by grace alone; and he makes them feel that they are so completely fallen, so entirely helpless, and so thoroughly hopeless, that nothing but a miracle, a daily miracle of mercy and grace, can ever carry their souls through the waste, howling wilderness, till he sets them before his face in glory. But the expression of the "everlasting arms being underneath," conveys not merely an intimation of what man is by nature, and of the sinner's feelings, when he first has his eyes opened to see, and his heart spiritually quickened to feel, the power of eternal things; but it also casts a ray of light on his experience all his journey through: the everlasting arms being underneath his soul, from first to last, to keep him from falling out of them into a never-ending hell. After all the goodness that God may have shewn to the soul; after all the mercy and truth that he may have brought into the conscience, let him but leave the man a moment, and he would infallibly fall into hell.

Yea, if God had led you up to this point of time, and now were to leave you to law and justice, sin, self, and Satan.

that clock opposite would scarce beat another stroke before your enemies had utterly overwhelmed you. Rutherford says somewhere in one of his Letters—"that if he had one foot in heaven, and God were to bid him shift for himself, he should tumble headlong into hell." He would want the power of God to put his other foot into heaven, so to speak, or he would drop down into the abyss of ever burning flame. So that what the soul wants is "the **everlasting** arms;" not as the mother says sometimes to her child. "I am quite tired of carrying you; I will take you a little further, and then you must walk home the rest of the way." No; that would not do for God's people. Like the poor paralytic child to which I have just alluded, we must be taken home every step of the way, and when we get home the Lord himself must take us into his own bosom. It would not do to be put down at the very threshold, nor in any place short of being brought into his own bosom, there to enjoy the smiles of eternal love.

The "everlasting arms," then, of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the divine Jehovah, are "underneath" every one of his people, and, being underneath them, they can neither fall through them nor out of them; but they are borne, and supported, and carried along by them until they are brought to the eternal enjoyment of a three-one God. Now, if these "everlasting arms" were not underneath a man, so "deceitful" is his heart, so "desperately wicked" is his corrupt nature, such awful stratagems does Satan lay for his feet, and such numerous perils encompass every step, that he must infallibly perish. But, my friends, what we want to **feel** is, that these arms **are** underneath us. What good will the doctrine do us? The doctrine of the "everlasting arms" being underneath us will not satisfy our souls, if we feel that we are sinking fathoms. If we keep sinking, sinking, sinking, and are afraid, at times, that we shall sink at last into hell, the bare doctrine that the "everlasting arms" are underneath God's

people will not satisfy us; but we want to **feel them under us**, so that we can rest upon them, and enjoy a blessed support in them and coming out of them. How secure the babe lies in its mother's arms as long as it can **feel** the arms touching and supporting its body; but let the mother withdraw the arm, the babe is in fear; it cries out in alarm: but so long as it feels the pressure of the mother's arms it sleeps on calm and secure. So with living souls: if they cannot find the "everlasting arms" underneath him, they cannot rest in the mere doctrine of God's upholding the church: but when they can feel a support given: when in trouble, in affliction, in sorrow, in temptation, there is a sensible leaning upon the everlasting arms, and a sensible support communicated by them, then they can rest calmly and contentedly upon them.

But, again, these "everlasting arms" must needs be very strong, for they are the arms of the Almighty, of him who has all strength concentrated in himself. Well; but are **strong** arms put underneath a man for no purpose? Do we not always proportion the machine to the work, and the work to the machine? Who ever constructed a steam-engine of 200 horsepower to break sticks and pick up straws? There is always a proportion betwixt the power and the work. Then, if the "everlasting arms" of the Almighty are underneath his church, they must bear a very great weight. Surely there must be some analogy betwixt the strength of God and the weakness of the soul, betwixt the iron character of the arms and the burden and weight, which they have to sustain. Just in proportion, then, as a man's soul is weighted down with burdens, exercised with temptations, tried by the devil, and harassed by the base corruptions working within; just in proportion as he is helplessly sinking down, does he find the value, and test the reality and divine efficacy of these "everlasting arms."

To talk, therefore, of knowing anything about the everlasting arms being underneath the soul, and not to feel that we are so burdened and weighted down, so exercised and harassed, so buffeted and tempted, and have such a pressure of heavy trials upon us, that we want all the power of God to support us, is nothing but folly and delusion. But, when a man is absolutely so weighted down that, could all the united arms of the creature, could all the human beings upon the face of the globe unite all their strength, and concentrate in one pair of arms all the power that is diffused through the whole human race, and then feel that these would not be sufficient to bear up his sinking soul; why, then, when a man is brought to see that all this power would be no more to him than if they were so many straws and sticks, he then begins to see and realize the sweetness of having the everlasting arms of an Almighty God stretched beneath him. Do you then want to prove that these arms are everlasting, and do you want to know that these everlasting arms are underneath **your** soul? It is not by reading what Elisha Coles says about the final perseverance of the saints, nor by looking into Dr. Hawker's morning and evening portions **though doubtless you might find very sweet and very appropriate remarks and proofs in each**: but it is by trying them for yourself: it is by being really so exercised and burdened in your soul, that nothing short of the everlasting arms can support you. This is the way to find its reality, to prove its truth, and to come into the sweet and blessed experience of it. But when you find your soul so burdened that nothing earthly or human can support it, and then drop into the arms of infinity, cast yourself as a poor sinking wretch into the arms of a covenant Jehovah, and then feel sensible strength and evident support communicated, so that you can rest upon them for life, for death, for time, for eternity, this is to

know of a truth that the everlasting arms are indeed underneath your soul.

III. **"And he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee."** What a free grace preacher Moses was! Moses sustained two characters. He was the mediator of the law (Gal. 3:19), and as such he preached the law powerfully; and, as "the man of God," he preached the gospel, too, blessedly; for "his doctrine dropped as the rain, and his speech distilled as the dew," when he testified of "the Rock, that his work is perfect" (Deut. 32:2-4). There is sweet gospel wrapped up in what Moses spoke here. There is no appeal to the creature. When he delivered his parting discourse, and preached his farewell sermon, he did not lay a load of exhortation upon the people: they were not bidden to cultivate piety, to make themselves holy, to overcome their sins in their own strength, that it was their duty to repent and believe, and to do a number of good works. No; Moses, like a faithful preacher, kept the law and gospel separate; and in preaching the gospel to the people in this, his dying sermon, did not load their shoulders with heavy burdens; but he points the eye of their soul up to God; he leads them away from the wretched, fallen creature, and directs their minds to their blessed Creator, who could work in them that which is well pleasing in his sight. **"He** shall thrust out the enemy from before thee." But must not **they** do something? Must not they fast and pray? Must not they mortify and macerate their bodies? Must not they put their hand to the work? Must not they be up and doing, and would not that be amply sufficient to overcome all their enemies? No, we find nothing about that. The Holy Ghost by Moses says nothing of what man is to do here: he says. **"He** shall thrust out the enemy from before thee."

Now who is "the enemy"? No doubt, literally and historically, the enemies were the seven accursed nations whom "the Lord would put out before them little by little" (Deut. 7:22); but it would be a poor interpretation to limit it to this. We have worse enemies than literal Canaanites; we have the spiritual Canaanites within. We have the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite, and all the seven accursed nations in us, for we have by nature "seven abominations in our heart" (Prov. 26:25), and none but God can thrust out these enemies from before us. But we must learn that they are **enemies** first. The children of Israel did not always feel that they were enemies. They often made a league with them, bowed down to their idols, and in various ways learnt their wicked works. There was a time when we acted in a similar manner; we made a covenant with our lusts, and entered into bonds of enmity with our treacherous foes, loving the world, and the things of time and sense, having our hearts set upon idols, and hugging in our bosom base abominations.

But when God enlightens the dark understanding, quickens the soul into life, and brings a sense of his grace and presence into the heart, we learn that his enemies are our enemies, and that our enemies are his enemies; and we learn what an enemy our flesh is to God and godliness. And when we have learnt that, we want the enemy "thrust out." We do not want, at least in our right minds, to hug our enemies as bosom friends, but we want them "thrust out," put out of our heart, their power and dominion overcome, and our feet placed upon their necks. But we cannot do it; they are so strong; they have such chariots of iron, and they are so crafty too; they will stay in the promised land as long as they can, so that there is no getting them out by our own wisdom and strength. Sometimes they will entice us to let them stay, and sometimes declare they will not go: but stay

in they will as long as they can: and thus we find that **we** cannot thrust them out.

Do you not sometimes find the world an enemy—covetousness an enemy—your wretched idolatries and spiritual adulteries enemies? Do you not find the base lusts that work in you, craving for gratification, the enemies of your righteous soul? And do you not find what powerful, what subtle, what flattering and deceitful enemies they are, that they will often come with an "Art thou in health, my brother?" when they carry a sword to smite you under the fifth rib? It is not, my friends, our outward enemies that can hurt us: it is our inward foes that are our worst enemies. Your outward enemies can little touch you. They may oppress and persecute you; they may wound your mind; they may hurt your character, but they cannot separate you, in soul-experience, from God: they cannot quench the spirit of prayer in your bosom; they cannot stop the sweet consolations of the Holy Ghost in your heart; they cannot bar out the presence of God from visiting your soul; but, on the contrary, as I have felt myself, when outward persecution is most active, inward peace often most abounds.

But our inward enemies! O, these are enemies indeed, because they shut out the presence of our best, our only Friend. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. "If a man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Then when we are serving mammon we are not serving God, and when we are loving the world, the love of God is indeed damped for the time as if lost out of the soul. Of all foes these bosom enemies are the worst, for they are like traitors within the garrison. If the wife of your bosom should ever become your enemy: if ever, which God forbid, if ever she should prove unfaithful to you, and betray all your bosom secrets to her paramour, could you find such an enemy as that? So your

darling lusts, that you have hugged in secret to your bosom, are the worst of enemies, for they keep out the presence of God, and by their base workings shut out, so to speak, the approach of the Comforter. We want them, then, put out of house and home; we want them "thrust out:" not indeed, that they can be eradicated out of our heart, or we be made perfect in the flesh, but that they may be thrust from their dominion, from their high throne and exalted seat in the affections.

And none but the Lord can "thrust out" these enemies from before us: none but he can really subdue and overcome these wretched foes in our bosom. But he will do it: for "He will thrust out the enemy from before thee." Whatever lust, whatever temptation, whatever secret snare, whatever bosom idol, you feel to be your enemy, God "will thrust it out from before you:" not, indeed, whilst you are hugging it as a friend—the promise runs not so, but when with grief you feel it to be your enemy, when you can appeal to God that his enemies are your enemies, and that you want these enemies of your soul to be slain, this pride overcome, this presumption rooted out, this hypocrisy trodden under foot, these darling sins crucified by the hand of God as his enemies and yours: when you come in soul-experience to that spot, then he will "thrust out the enemy from before thee;" and, in fact, he is at that moment thrusting out the enemy when you feel it to be the enemy of your soul's peace. The moment that a poor child of God feels his sins to be his enemies, that moment God is working in his heart to thrust out these enemies from before his face.

IV. But he will do more than that: **"He will say, Destroy them."** The words do not run thus, "He will destroy them," but he will **say to you,** " Destroy them," that is, will bid you destroy them. "O," say you, "that is an impossible task, I

cannot do that." Nor can you, but God can enable you; and we may depend upon it that our lusts and passions will never be overcome, never be subdued, till we can enter into the experience of the words, till we can destroy them, that is, commit them into the hands of God to be destroyed.

Have we never found this to be true? Here is that monster **pride**, that subtle foe. It is always whispering its accursed breath in our hearts. Have you never felt yourself to be such a wretch, because this vile monster crept and crawled in your bosom, that you could deliberately stamp him under foot? Now, when you were there you were, in the experience of the text, destroying him. Did you never feel what an accursed thing is hypocrisy, and did you never come before God's throne, and want to have this hypocrisy trampled under foot, eradicated, exterminated? When you came to that spot in soul-experience, you said, "Destroy him." And did you never want your covetousness, your unbelief, your idolatries, your spiritual adulteries, your going out after the things of time and sense, everything that your corrupt heart most craved and loved, did you never find a solemn sentence of condemnation passed upon it in your soul, so that you could, so to speak, put your hand into your bosom and pull out lust after lust, and base desire after base desire, dash them upon the ground, and stamp them under your foot?

Now, if your soul was ever brought there **and if the Lord ever blessed you with a sense of mercy and grace, it has been brought there**, if ever your soul was brought there, you have been in the experience of the text—"And shall say, Destroy them." And you were enabled, so far as God worked in you, to destroy them. You no longer encouraged them; you no longer held communion with them; you no longer embraced them with affection: but you said, "Get out of my sight, ye vipers. O, that God would utterly

exterminate you: O, that he would never suffer you to rise up again in my carnal mind: O, that I could always be humble, and broken down, and melted at the feet of the Redeemer. O that cursed pride, and awful hypocrisy, and dreadful presumption, and miserable worldliness, and all the hateful and all the horrible lusts of my carnal mind, were completely swept out of my heart!" Now, if your soul was ever there, you know what the text means—"And shall say, Destroy them."

My friends, we must take the text as it stands; it is a part of God's word. There are many people who are very glad to hear about the eternal God being their refuge, and what a blessed thing it is to have the everlasting arms underneath the church—they would almost pull a man out of the pulpit who did not preach that: but when we come to thrusting out bosom enemies, and enforce the destruction of inward lusts—"O," say they, "that is legal, that savours of Arminianism. What we want is this—and this is our gospel—the doctrines of grace preached up to the very heights: as high as you like; then plenty of assurance, and as much carnal comfort as ever we can have: with a half a dozen bosom lusts sitting day by day round our table, eating and drinking to their heart's content—no cross, no self-denial, no crucifixion, no melancholy. Let us have the doctrines, let us have the assurance. and then let us and our lusts be the best friends possible: let us live and die in their embrace: and firmly believe we shall see God in glory." That is dead doctrinal Calvinism: but that is not the teaching of the Holy Ghost in the conscience: that is not the work and witness of the blessed Spirit in the soul.

He that teaches one truth teaches another: and the same blessed Spirit that brings into the soul a sweet sense of the eternal God being our refuge, and the everlasting arms being

stretched underneath to save us from a never-ending hell, will convince us and make us feel that God's enemies are our enemies. He will, from time to time, though again and again we shall feel the poisonous tooth of the serpent within; but he will, from time to time, thrust out the enemy from before us, and again and again he will enable us, with holy jealousy and blessed indignation, to say, "Destroy them." O may they be crucified within us, and may our soul be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, that he may reign and rule in our heart, that we may serve him with every faculty of the mind, that we may yield up to him body, soul, and spirit, live and die in his blessed embrace, follow him in the strait and narrow path, wear his cross that we may one day wear his crown: and suffer with him that we may be also glorified together. This, I believe, is sound doctrine, and this, I believe, is sound experience, and, with all my heart, and with all my soul, I pronounce to it, a solemn Amen.