

## **THE LIVING SACRIFICE PRESENTED, AND THE WILL OF GOD PROVED ACCEPTABLE**

Preached on Lord's Day Evening, August 10th, 1856, at Gower Street Chapel, London

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." Romans 12:1, 2

The precepts of the gospel are, or should be, as dear to the child of God as the promises. They form part of the same inspired testimony, rest upon the same immutable basis, and are applied to the heart, as needed, by the same blessed Spirit. But, as the promises, if they are intermixed with legal conditions, lose all their sweetness and blessedness, so the precepts, if blended with, or suspended upon, any supposed creature strength, are thrust out of the place which they occupy in the gospel, and become mere legal duties. It can never be too much insisted upon, that promise and precept belong to, and are integral parts of, the same gospel, are alike unconditional, and that the same Spirit who applies the promise gives power to perform the precept. If we stray from this simple line of truth we fall, on the one hand, either into Antinomianism, by neglecting or despising the precepts altogether, or, on the other, into Pharisaism, by making them legal observances. Betwixt the barren heights of Antinomianism and the deep morass of Pharisaism, there lies a very narrow line. It is something like the paths in the Swiss Alps, where on one side a steep rock rises into a mountain height, and on the other a perpendicular precipice sinks into an unfathomable depth, whilst the line of safety runs as a

thread between the two.

See how this blessed Apostle, Paul, handles the precept here: "I beseech you by the mercies of God." "I do not come," he would say, "with a rod, to flog you into obedience: I do not hold over your heads the thunders and lightnings of Sinai, to frighten you into a performance of the gospel, but I come before you almost upon my knees of supplication; and I beseech you, dear Christian friends, by the mercies of God felt in your souls, to present your bodies a living sacrifice." This is the only way by which any minister of truth can safely and soundly enforce gospel precepts. He must set them forth utterly untainted with legality and self-righteousness, and base them—as the gospel and all that is connected with it is based, upon the free grace of God. With God's blessing, then, in attempting, with His help, to address you from the words before us, I shall endeavour,

I. First, to open up a little of those mercies of God, which form the basis of the precept.

II. Secondly, to show you what it is to "present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service."

III. Thirdly, to point out what the Apostle means by the solemn warning, "Be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind."

IV. Fourthly, how we thus "prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."

I. We are surrounded with mercies—mercies for the body, and mercies for the soul. But, in order to arrange them somewhat more clearly, I shall look at them, first, as

belonging to the Church of God at large; and, secondly, as personal and individual.

i. In looking at mercies as belonging to the Church collectively, let us cast our eyes back to the spring head, go at once to the original fountain, where we see mercy welling forth from the bosom of the Triune God. Mercy presided at those eternal councils, wherein salvation was planned by the holy Three-in-One. The sure promise is, "Mercy shall be built up for ever;" but the foundation was then laid in the predestinated incarnation of the Son of God. We pass onward, and see this mercy revealed in the garden of Eden. Directly man sinned and fell, mercy stepped forth out of the bosom of God into visible manifestation, in the first promise, that "the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head." What God promised in the garden He fulfilled at the cross, when "He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." Would we see and feel the mercies of God, we must see them in the sufferings and sorrows of the Lord Jesus, and hear Him whispering to our souls, "Sinner, I suffered all this for thee."

But the mercies that chiefly concern us are those which are personal and special, which come into our own hearts, and are made manifest to our own individual consciences. And who here present, that fears God, has not mercies, many mercies, to revolve in his bosom? Who has not a catalogue, and some a long catalogue, to be thankful for? We may bless the mercy of God for preserving us during our days of unregeneracy, raising us up, many of us, from beds of sickness, when death stared us in the face; keeping us up to the time and moment when His grace entered into our heart, and quickened us into spiritual life. We see the mercy of God in giving us to feel the weight and burden of sin; in sending into our soul the Spirit of grace and supplication, enabling us

to pour out our hearts before Him with groans, and sighs, and tears. We see the mercy of God in making known to us the plan of salvation; discovering unto us that wondrous way whereby His jarring attributes were all harmonised in the incarnation and death of His dear Son, giving us to see that salvation was all of grace, and thus raising up a blessed hope in our soul. We can see the mercy of God in revealing Christ to us, making Him known by a divine power, holding Him up to our believing eye, and raising up that special faith which takes hold of His blood and righteousness, and shelters itself beneath the skirt of His dying love. We can see the mercy of God in establishing us in His truth, when so many are left to believe a lie, to drink down delusion, to be entangled in every error that Satan spreads before them. We see His mercy also in carrying on the work begun, in maintaining the faith He imparted, cherishing the hope He inspired, reviving the love He shed abroad. It is one of the choicest mercies bestowed on us that we love the gospel, because we have felt its power and tasted its sweetness in our soul. Nor is it merely in His grace that we see and feel the mercy of God. We are daily surrounded with them in providence. The bread we eat, the raiment we wear, the house we live in, the kind friends that God has raised up for us, the social ties and intimate relationships with which He has blessed us, as husbands, wives, or children—what daily mercies are there in all these daily providences! And if our lot be rough and thorny in providence, or His mercies in this channel be hidden from our eyes, this may only enhance the more His mercies in grace in providing for the afflicted and distressed a throne of grace, giving us a mercy-seat, seating there a Mediator to whom we may approach, and freely tell our wants and woes; thus amply compensating for every loss and bereavement by a larger portion of spiritual consolation.

There are, indeed, times and seasons when all the mercies of

God, both in providence and grace, seem hidden from our eyes, when what with the workings of sin, rebellion, and unbelief, with a thorny path in the world and a rough, trying road in the soul, we see little of the mercies of God, though surrounded by them. Like Elisha's servant, though the mountain is surrounded by the horses and chariots of fire, and the angels of God are round about us, yet our eyes are holden, we cannot see them; and at the very moment when God is already showering mercies upon us, and preparing others in reserve, through some trying dispensation, we are filled perhaps with murmuring and rebellion, and cry, "Is His mercy clean gone for ever? will He be favourable no more?" This is our infirmity, our weakness; but it no more arrests the shower of God's mercies than the parched field arrests the falling rain. The mercies of God, like Himself, are infinite, and He showers them in rich profusion upon His Church and people. They come freely as the beams of the sun shining in the sky; as the breezes of the air we breathe; as the river that never ceases to flow. Everything testifies of the mercy of God to those whose eyes are anointed to see it, and are interested in it. To them all things in nature, in providence, and in grace, proclaim with one united harmonious voice, "The mercy of the Lord endureth for ever."

Now, as these mercies of God are sensibly felt in the soul they soften, meeken, and subdue the spirit, melt it into the obedience of faith, and raise up in it the tenderness of love. By this we are prepared to enter into the beauty and blessedness of the precept as an integral part of the gospel. If I take a review of the mercies of God, and feel no interest in them; if they are not personally and individually mine, I slight, perhaps even rebel against the precept as too hard and severe. The yoke is too heavy for my neck to bear. My Jewish mind, my stiff-necked disposition, shrinks from obedience to God's word. But let my soul be favoured with a

sweet discovery of the mercies of God; let them reach my heart, soften and subdue my spirit; then there is no cross too heavy to be taken up, no trial too hard to be endured, no path of suffering and sorrow in which we cannot patiently, if not gladly, walk. The reason why the precepts are not obeyed is because the mercies of God are not felt. Love and obedience attend each other as the shadow waits upon the sun.

II. But I pass on from considering the precepts generally, to examine *the particular precept*, as it stands revealed here for our obedience by the pen of the Holy Ghost, "*That ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*" My friends, if the Son of God has redeemed us by His blood, all that we are and have belongs to Him; our body, soul, and spirit are His. Nothing is our own; we are bought with a price. In laying down His precious life for us, He has redeemed us unto Himself, that we should be His peculiar people, and not only render to Him the calves of our lips, but give Him body, soul, spirit, substance, life itself; all that we are and have being His by sovereign right. He lays claim to them all, not only as our Creator, but as our Redeemer, having bought them by His precious blood. When we feel this mercy warm in our soul, can we keep body or soul back? Look at Abraham. When God called to him, and said, "Abraham!" what was his answer? "Here I am." "Here is my body, here is my soul, here is my substance, here is my wife, here is my son; all are at Thy disposal. What shall I do, Lord? Take them; they are all Thine. Thou hast a right to them, and Thou must do with them, and Thou must do with me, what seemeth good in Thy sight."

i. Under these feelings, then, we should "*present our bodies,*" not indeed, leaving our souls behind. For what is the casket

without the jewel? what is the body without the soul? Will God accept the body if the soul be left behind? That is popery; to give the body and keep back the soul. Not so with the dear family of God; they present their bodies, but with their bodies they present the soul that lodges in their body—the house with its tenant, the jewel case with the jewels in it. But what is it to *present their bodies*? They must be presented as "*a living sacrifice*." God accepts no dead sacrifices. You will recollect, under the Jewish law the sacrifice was to be a living animal, and that without spot or blemish. No dead lamb or kid, but a living animal, perfect in its kind, was to be the victim sacrificed. So if we are to present our bodies, there must be "a living sacrifice." It may well be asked, what have we sacrificed for the Lord's sake? Have we been called upon to sacrifice our property, prospects, idols, affections, name, fame, and worldly interests; and have we obeyed the call? Abraham did not offer Isaac until the voice of the Lord called him to make the sacrifice; but when the Lord called him to do so, Abraham at once rendered obedience to the voice. So must it be with those that walk in the steps of faithful Abraham. If they are called upon as all are, sooner or later—to make sacrifices, those sacrifices they must make. Their *good name* certainly will be sacrificed. Or, you may be called upon to sacrifice even your worldly substance. God may require this at your hands. You may be in some position of life, some occupation or profession, which you cannot carry on consistently with the requirements of the gospel; of this, then, you must make a sacrifice. Or if not called upon, as I and others have been, to make these personal sacrifices, you will have to sacrifice your pride and self-righteousness. Many of your fondly cherished schemes, many of your airy castles, and even things that you might legitimately and with a good conscience enjoy, but which would stumble others you must give up; in a word, everything that interferes with the claims

of God upon your Christian obedience.

ii. Now, in thus presenting our bodies "a living sacrifice," it becomes also a "*holy*" offering, because what is done in faith is accepted of God as being sanctified by His blessed Spirit. If we make a sacrifice without the blessed Spirit's operation upon our heart, it is a dead sacrifice. Men go into monasteries, deluded women enter convents, become sisters of mercy, and what not, offer their bodies a sacrifice to God, but it is not a living sacrifice, because there is no spiritual life in either offerer or offering. But when we sacrifice our warmest affections, our prospects in life, everything that flesh loves, because the gospel claims it at our hands, and we do it through the constraining love of Christ, *that* is a living sacrifice, and is "*holy*," because springing out of the sanctifying influences and operations of the Holy Spirit. We indeed, looking at ourselves, see nothing holy in it, for sin is mingled with all we do, but God's eye discerns the precious from the vile. He sees the purity of His own work; and He can separate what we cannot, the acting of the Spirit and the working of the flesh. God looks at that which His own Spirit inspires, and His own grace produces, and He accepts that as holy.

iii. And, therefore, it is "*acceptable*" unto God. Let us not suppose that God looks idly on, whether men live to His glory or not. Let us not think He is such a God as the Epicureans imagined Him to be, that sits enthroned upon some cloud, and takes no notice of the inhabitants of the earth. Was it the same thing in God's sight whether David committed adultery and murder, or whether he spared the life of Saul, when that life was in his hand? It would make God an immoral Being, it would make Him worse than ourselves, to say that this holy God who sits enthroned in glory takes no notice of the deeds of man upon earth, and that it is



indifferent to Him whether His children live to themselves or live to His glory. This would be abusing the truth of God: using one part of God's truth to wrest out of His hand that which He dearly loves—His own holiness, His hatred of sin, and flaming indignation against transgression. When the widow dropped her two mites into the treasury, it was acceptable unto God; when the disciples forsook all things and followed Jesus, it was acceptable to Him. So what you are enabled to do by the grace of God; the sacrifices that you have made or are making; the tears, sighs, groans, cries, longings, and breathings that you experience, springing out of His grace—these are acceptable unto God.

iv. It is also "a *reasonable* service." Does He not rightfully claim all the powers of our mind, all the obedience of our heart? Is it not reasonable that we should give Him all that we are and have? Is true religion not consistent with the highest dictates of enlightened reason? It is true that our reasoning mind, unenlightened by the Spirit of God, does set itself against the truth of God; but when the eyes of our understanding are enlightened, the truth of God is commended to our reasoning faculties. I can say for myself that I at times see with my enlightened understanding the greatest beauty and glory in the Word of God. The truth of God is not only dear to my heart's affection, and is commended to my inmost conscience, but my enlightened understanding, my reasoning powers influenced by grace, can see in it an inexpressible beauty and glory. The service, therefore, I render on that ground, is a "reasonable" service; and may it ever be such! Our prayers, when they are dictated by the Spirit of God, are not effusions of nonsense, but petitions agreeable to the Scripture and an enlightened understanding. Our preaching, too, if we are taught of God, if we have a ministerial gift, if we can open God's precious truth, will commend itself to the enlightened understanding

of the children of God. The world, it is true, will count these things idle tales, and despise and ridicule both us and them; but the children of God, if we preach the truth with purity and power, are sufficient judges that what we speak is commended to their understanding, as well as approved of by their conscience, and embraced by their affections. Why should I have this evening so large a congregation? To hear falsehood or nonsense? I should insult you, and you would cast insult upon me, unless we met together this evening for a reasonable service—for prayer, for praise, for the preached gospel, such as our understanding, as illuminated by the Spirit's teaching, is satisfied with. We speak the words of soberness and truth, things known, felt, handled, and tasted. We preach truth commended to our understanding by the Spirit of God, and enshrined in our warmest and tenderest affections. We love God's truth, because we have felt its power; and we preach God's truth to you who have felt the same power, who understand it, feel it, and love it; nor would I wish to preach to any people who do not spiritually understand and experimentally feel what I lay before them.

III. But I proceed to what the Apostle enforces as to not being "*conformed to this world, but to be transformed in the renewing of our mind.*" Now, why does this immediately follow? For this reason. Because, in proportion as we are conformed to the spirit of this world, our understanding becomes dull in the things of God, our affections cold and torpid, and our consciences less tender and sensitive. There is an eternal opposition between God and the world lying in wickedness. In order, then, that our spiritual experience of the truth of God should maintain its ground, it must not be dulled and deadened by conformity to the world. It is like the sabre that the soldier carries into battle; it must not trail unsheathed upon the ground lest point and edge be dulled; both must be kept keen and sharp, that execution may be

done upon the foe. So it is with our enlightened understanding, with our tender conscience, and our heavenly affections. If we let them fall upon the world, it is like a soldier trailing his sabre upon the pavement; every step he takes dulls both edge and point. If we are conformed to this world, we lose the sweet understanding that we had before of the precious truth of God; we lose that tender sensitiveness of conscience, whereby sin—any sin—becomes a grief and a burden to the soul. A Christian should be what was said of an ancient knight, "without fear and without reproach." The least suspicion of either would have been a blot upon Bayard's scutcheon. So the Christian's shield should be without a stain, his reputation without a blot. His character should not only be free from blemish, but even from suspicion—as untarnished as the modesty of a woman, or the honour and bravery of a man.

Now, we often get into this worldly conformity, and run the risk of dulling the sword and sullyng the shield, by degrees. We give way in this and that thing. We are hedged in, it is true, by the precepts of the gospel, the alarms of a tender conscience, and many powerful restraints—so many banks and dykes to keep out the sea of the world; but, as in Holland, if one breach be made in the dyke, the sea at once rushes in, so, if one gap be made in the conscience, then the sea of worldliness rushes through the breach, and but for God's grace would soon deluge the soul. But even apart from having any peculiar temptation to make a wide breach like this, our social ties, our daily occupation, the friends and relations whom we love in the flesh, all, through their power over our natural affections, draw us aside from time to time into this worldly conformity. Here, then, is the point where we have to make our chief stand; for if we are conformed to the maxims, the principles, the customs, and the spirit of the world, we so far lose that spiritual position which is a

believer's highest blessing and privilege. We descend from the mount of communion with the Lord, and fall into a cold, miserable spot, where the life of God, though not extinct, is reduced to its lowest ebb. The Apostle therefore says, "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." As worldly conformity is subdued and departed from, there is the transforming process of which the Apostle here speaks, whereby we become renewed in the spirit of our mind. In other words, the Holy Spirit, by His work upon the soul, renews the life of God, revives faith, hope, love, prayer, praise, spirituality of mind, with every tender feeling and every godly sensation that stirs and moves in a living heart. As, then, the Spirit of God renews His work upon the heart, He brings us out of this worldly conformity. He discovers to us the evil of it; He makes and keeps the conscience tender and sensitive; He shows us that if we get conformed to the world we lose our evidences; that they become dulled and obscured; that we are soon deprived of communion with God, of comfortable access to our best, our heavenly Friend; that our taste and appetite for spiritual things get palled: and that our very profession itself becomes a burden. As the conscience then gets more and more awakened to see and feel these things, we become convinced that we do but reap what we have sown; and the Spirit of God, by pressing the charge more closely home, shows us, and sometimes by painful experience, such as long days of darkness and heavy, dragging nights of desertion, the evil of worldly conformity. Now, as He thus brings us out of worldly conformity, by showing us the evil of it, and that by this miserable cleaving to earth we rob ourselves of our happiest hours, our sweetest hopes, and our dearest enjoyments, He draws the soul nearer to Christ; and as He keeps renewing us in the spirit of our mind, by dropping one precious truth after another into the heart, He revives faith, renews hope, communicates love, draws forth prayer, bestows spirituality

of mind and affection; and by these means a transforming process takes place, whereby the soul is brought out of worldly conformity, and is transformed into the likeness of a suffering Jesus.

To produce this conformity is the work of the blessed Spirit, whose office it is to take of the things of Christ and reveal them to the heart. Thus He takes of His blood, His righteousness, His holy life, His agonizing death, brings to the garden of Gethsemane, carries to the cross at Calvary, and by opening up the sorrows and sufferings of "Immanuel, God with us," conforms the soul to His marred image. In proportion, then, as the blessed Spirit brings us out of worldly conformity, He renews us in the spirit of our mind, and transforms us into the image of Christ. The understanding now becomes more enlightened, the conscience more sensitive, the affections more fixed on heavenly things; there is more peace in believing, and the soul rejoices more "in hope of the glory of God." But take the converse. As we get into the world, we become gradually conformed to it, and soon lose that spirituality of mind, that tenderness of conscience, those heavenly affections that formerly prevailed. We get cold, stupid, lifeless, sink into a barren spot, where we are of little comfort to ourselves, and of little use to the Church of God. How we need, then, the blessed Spirit of God to be renewing us daily in the spirit of our minds, and thus transforming us into the suffering image of the sorrowing Son of God. For there is no medium between spirituality and carnality, between the image of Christ and conformity to the world. As there is no middle path between the strait road and the broad one, so there is no middle way between fruitfulness and barrenness, prayerfulness and prayerlessness, watchfulness and carelessness, repentance and hardness, faith and unbelief, the life of a Christian and the life of a worldling.

IV. I now proceed to show you the connection of this being renewed in the spirit of our mind with "*proving what is that good, and perfect, and acceptable will of God.*" The will of God is "good, perfect, and acceptable." How are we to prove personally and experimentally that it is all this? That good and perfect will runs counter, over and over again, to my natural inclinations, sets itself firmly against my fleshly desires. God's will calls for self-denial, but I want self-gratification; it requires obedience, but my carnal mind is the essence of disobedience; it demands many sacrifices, but my coward flesh revolts from them; it bids me walk in the path of suffering, sorrow, and tribulation, but my fleshly mind shrinks back, and says, "No, I cannot tread in that path!" As long, then, as I am conformed to the world, I cannot see the path, for this worldly conformity has thrown a veil over my eyes; or if I do dimly and faintly see it, I am not willing or able to walk in it, because my carnal mind rebels against all trouble or self-denial, or anything connected with the cross of Christ. But, on the other hand, if by any gracious operations of the Spirit on my heart I am drawn out of this worldly conformity, am renewed in the spirit of my mind, and transformed into the likeness of the suffering Son of God, then "that good, and perfect, and acceptable will of God," becomes commended to my conscience.

1. First, I see how "*good*" that will is. It may be, nay, it is very contrary to my will; it points out a very rough and rugged path, in which it bids me walk; it calls for crucifixion of the flesh in every direction; it overturns scheme after scheme, destroys castle after castle, pulls down all lofty buildings and fond imaginations with a long succession of fairy paradises, and loved, almost idolised plans and dreams of earthly happiness; but still, it is a "good" will, as issuing and emanating from Him who is supreme in goodness and mercy, yea, goodness itself. But we only see, acknowledge,

and submit to it as a good will when we are renewed in the spirit of our mind, cast into the mould of the gospel, and conformed to the suffering image of Jesus. What said the suffering, agonising Lord in Gethsemane's gloomy garden? "Father, let this cup pass from Me!" But how at once His holy soul, in the midst of agony and suffering, resolved itself into obedience! "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." There we see how the suffering Son of God accepted His Father's will as a "good" will, though that will led Him through agonies unutterable.

2. Again, it is a "*perfect*" will. There is no spot, stain, or shadow of weakness, error, or instability in it. It is and indeed must be necessarily as perfect as God Himself; for it emanates from Him who is all perfection—a discovery of His mind and character. But when this will sets itself against our flesh, thwarts our dearest hopes, and overturns our fondest schemes, we cannot see that it is a perfect will, but are much disposed to fret, murmur, and rebel against it. That "perfect" will may take a child out of your bosom; may strike down a dear husband, or tear from your arms a beloved wife; may strip you of all your worldly goods; may put your feet into a path of suffering, and lay you upon a bed of pain and languishing; cast you into hot furnaces or overwhelming floods, and make your life almost a burden to yourself. How then, under circumstances so trying and distressing as these, can you say, "It is a perfect will. I acknowledge and submit to it as such. Let that will be my will, and reign and rule in my heart without a murmur of resistance to it"? It is certainly impossible to do so as long as the world is conformed to, for the very spirit of that is opposition to the perfect will of God. Until, therefore, the soul is brought out of worldly conformity to view things, not with carnal but with spiritual eyes, it cannot be reconciled to it, acknowledge it as a "perfect" will, and as such submit to it.

3. And "*acceptable*," too; not, indeed, to our natural reason or to our carnal heart, which see no glory in anything heavenly or divine; not to our earthly affections, which it continually thwarts and crosses; but acceptable to our renewed mind, to our enlightened understanding, to our spiritual will, as they are melted and moulded into conformity with God's will. This good, and acceptable, and perfect will is far, far out of the sight of the carnal eye, out of the sound of the worldly ear, out of the touch of the worldly hand; but is made manifest to the spiritual eye, listened to by the spiritual ear, and laid hold of by the spiritual hand. To realise this for ourselves, we shall find it good sometimes to look back and see how that divine will has, in previous instances, proved itself acceptable to our renewed mind. We can see too how supremely that will has reigned, and yet how supreme in all points for our good. It has ordered or overruled all circumstances and all events, amidst a complication of difficulties in providence and grace. Nothing has happened to our injury, but all things, according to the promise, have worked together for our good. Whatever we have lost, it was better for us that it was taken away; whatever property, or comfort, or friends, or health, or earthly happiness we have been deprived of, it was better for us to lose than to retain them. Was your dear child taken away? It might be to be safely housed, or to teach you resignation to God's sacred will. Has a dear partner been snatched from your embrace? It was that God might be your better Partner and undying Friend. Was any portion of your worldly substance taken away? It was that you might be taught to live a life of faith, not only on the grace, but on the providence of God. Have your fondest schemes been marred, your youthful hopes blighted, and you struck in the warmest affections of your heart? It was to remove an idol, to dethrone a rival of Christ, to crucify the object of earthly love, that a purer, holier, and more enduring affection might



be enshrined in its stead. All this we can now see, looking back on the past; but the present is dark and obscure. How shall we find the will of God acceptable now? Only as we are renewed in the spirit of our mind, and are transformed and conformed to the suffering image of the sorrowing Son of God. How fearful, then, how dangerous, and yet how ensnaring, is that worldly conformity which sets us in deadly opposition to that good and perfect will of God which was, and is "acceptable" to His dear Son, to all the holy angels round the throne, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to His spiritually-minded people upon earth, and hateful to none but devils and carnal, ungodly men. And how truly blessed to be brought out of the power and prevailing influence of this worldly spirit, and to be cast into the gospel mould, where, being renewed in the spirit of our mind, we prove that the will of God is not only "good," pure goodness, and "perfect," worthy of all His glorious perfections, but "acceptable" to our heart and affections, which therefore tenderly embrace it, and thus, as it were, incorporate it into our will, making the two wills one. To bring us to this point is the grand object of all gospel discipline; and one may say that the ultimatum of gospel obedience is,

"To lie passive in His hand,  
And know no will but His."

Here then only can we fully enter into the beauty and blessedness of gospel truth; here only can we submit to the weight of a daily cross, glory in tribulation, patiently endure afflictions, feel the sweetness of the promises, walk in obedience to the precepts, and tread the path that leads to endless glory. Here only is our rebellious will silenced; our carnal affections restrained, the raging strength of sin curbed, and the heart softened and melted into an obedient acquiescence with the will and word of God. Now view the

contrast. If we begin by degrees to drink into the spirit of the world; if the things of time and sense engross all our thoughts, cares, and affections, and if we gradually drift into a course of carnality and slothfulness, carried away by a flood of earthly pursuits and cares, how rugged, steep, and up-hill the path of obedience becomes. Prayer and supplication, reading and meditation, converse with the exercised people of God, the very house of prayer itself, and the hearing of the gospel, those blessed privileges so dear to a child of God in a spiritual frame, become a weariness when the heart is in the world.

But one thing we must deeply bear in mind, that as we cannot deliver ourselves from worldly conformity, so we cannot renew ourselves in the spirit of our mind. The blessed Spirit must do both for us, and work in us to will and to do of His good pleasure. But as we are led to feel the misery of the one state, and the blessedness of the other, we shall seek after these gracious operations and divine influences; and as the blessed Spirit from time to time brings the soul out of this worldly conformity any transforms it into the suffering image of Christ, it sees more and more the beauty and blessedness of walking in this path; and cleaving to Christ and His cross with its tenderest affections proves for itself the goodness, acceptability, and perfection of the will of God.