

The Meeting at the Mercy Seat

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"And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel." Exodus 25:22

God and man once were friends; but this friendship rested on a mutable basis, for it depended wholly on the continued obedience of one who, though created after the image of God, was made free to stand, yet free also to fall. Now, as long as man, thus created upright, was on terms of amity and friendship with God he was happy; for it is impossible, in the very nature of things, that happiness, real happiness, happiness worthy of the name, can subsist apart from God, still less ever dwell in the bosom of any created intelligence, whether man or angel, who is at enmity with the glorious and omnipotent Author of his being.

Seeing, then, this happiness in the divine favour enjoyed by our first parents, Satan, whose very name signifies the "enemy," the implacable enemy of God and man, plotted to overthrow that state of innocence in which man stood before his Maker as created "in his image after his likeness;" and with his innocence to destroy his happiness. The towering pride and passionate jealousy of Lucifer, once the bright and radiant Son of the morning, could not brook the sight of a creature raised out of the dust to occupy a position of happiness and innocence from which he had fallen, and to enjoy that favour which he himself by disobedience had irreparably lost. But a worse—if there could be a worse—a

more infernal feeling than envy against man, moved the arch-fiend to plot his deep-laid scheme. There burnt in his bosom a desperate, an undying enmity against the God of heaven; and he determined, if I may use the expression, to spite God, to defeat his plans, to overthrow his purposes, and to mar that fair creation of which he had made man in this lower sphere the ruling head. If he could but ruin man as he himself had been ruined; if he could but deface the image of God in him, and draw the slimy trail of sin over this lower world which God had pronounced so very good, it would seem to afford him some such gratification as we may conceive a fiend would feel in hovering, like a vulture over a battle field, to glut eyes and ears with sights and sounds of woe. In the depths of his infinite wisdom, the Sovereign Ruler of all events permitted him to succeed in this hellish plot. The God of all grace had thoughts of mercy and peace in his own bosom which were in due time to be brought to light. Counsel had already been taken between the Father and the Son in the fore-view of the creation and the fall; a glorious plan of salvation devised, a book of life written, and the names of the chosen saints of God inscribed therein. The Lord, therefore, suffered this plot to succeed. Satan tempts the woman; the woman tempts the man; he falls under the power of temptation; he disobeys the express command of God; sin enters into the world, and "death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, in that all have sinned." (Rom. 5:12.)

But what, we may ask, was the *immediate* consequence of this fatal act of disobedience? The subsisting friendship between God and man was instantly broken; man became an enemy and an alien; the ground itself was cursed for man's sake; this fair scene, this lower creation on which God had stamped his own approbation, became utterly debased by sin and corruption into that wreck of misery and crime which

now appears everywhere spread before the spiritual eye.

But were God's purposes to be thus defeated? Shall the archfiend prove himself stronger than Omnipotence and wiser than Omniscience? more potent to destroy than God to create, more powerful to plot ruin than God to overthrow his scheme? No. In the eternal plans of God provision had been already made against the schemes and plots of this hater of God and destroyer of the bodies and souls of the sons of men. Can we believe, for a single moment, that the fall was some unforeseen event which broke in unexpectedly upon the mind of God; that it was an unlooked-for accident, and therefore that the whole plan of redemption was a scheme unthought of till the fall of man made some remedy necessary? Was there no "book of life of the Lamb *slain before the foundation of the world?*" And if the Lamb were in the purposes of God "slain from the foundation of the world," the Book of Life must have been written from as ancient a date. (Rev. 13:8.) Do we not read also of "the *blood* of the *everlasting* covenant" (Heb. 13:20); and of the saints being "chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world?" (Eph. 1:4.) How evident, then, it is that the whole plan of redemption by "the precious blood of Christ as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot" was foreordained together with him before the foundations of the earth were laid or the day-spring knew its place. (1 Pet. 1:19, 20; Job 38:4, 12.)

This glorious scheme of redeeming love lay, however, deeply hid in the bosom of God till the time arrived for bringing it to light. But as soon as needed the wondrous plan dawned into view, and was first ushered into birth from the lips of the Most High in the very garden where man sinned, and was wrapped up in the judgment then pronounced and the verdict given; for in the bosom of that condemning sentence the first promise of redemption was lodged, and out of it was brought

to light that "the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head." This was the first intimation that the schemes of Satan should be disappointed. "The seed of the woman"—of the very woman whom he had so entangled—should "bruise" that "head" in which lay all that subtlety which had planned the scheme, and all that poison which was poured forth into man's nature when its fangs fastened for the first time upon human flesh. An intimation was also given at the same time of the sufferings of the Son of God to be manifested in flesh by the declaration that "the seed of the serpent should bruise his heel." Sacrifices were then first instituted, and the worship of God thus put upon a new basis; which Abel received in faith and acted upon, but which Cain rejected, as preferring, in his waywardness, the former mode of bringing of the fruit of the ground as an offering unto the Lord—agreeable enough to the worship of God by man in his innocency, but now unacceptable from him as a sinner. Time rolled on. I need not enter in detail into the various circumstances which gradually issued in a clearer revelation of God's eternal counsels. But one point I must draw your attention to as closely connected with the subject of my text. In order to carry the promise of a Redeemer from the seed of the woman into effect, God chose to himself a people which was to spring from the loins of Abraham. This people was to be a peculiar and separate people, not only that the descent and lineage of the Messiah from Abraham might be carefully preserved, but that there might be set up upon earth the true worship of God until his dear Son should appear in the flesh. This people, after 400 years' bondage in Egypt, he brought into the wilderness, thus in a peculiar manner separating them from all the nations of the earth, that he might manifest more clearly and positively the counsels of his eternal wisdom, to provide redemption through the atoning blood of his dear Son. After, therefore, he had given the law of the ten commandments, commonly

called the moral law, God called Moses up into the Mount, where he was forty days and nights, and there he opened up to him in type and figure the mystery of the Gospel by showing him the pattern of the tabernacle with all the vessels of service which belonged to it. His words to Moses were, "Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it." (Exod. 25:8, 9.) The tabernacle was "the sanctuary," for therein was the most holy place, in which God dwelt in a visible manner between the cherubims. But this sanctuary was a type of the sacred humanity which the Son of God was to take into union with his own divine Person, and in which should dwell all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

But you will observe that the first thing which he bade Moses make after giving him this direction was *an ark*. "And they shall make an ark of shittim wood; two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof. And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold; within and without shalt thou overlay it, and shalt make upon it a crown of gold round about." (Exod. 25:10, 11.) Upon the ark there was to be "a mercy seat" of the exact size of the ark itself, so as completely to cover it. "And thou shalt make a mercy seat of pure gold: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half shall be the breadth thereof." (Exod. 25:17.)

But let me now repeat once more the words of my text; for it is in connection with the ark of the covenant and the mercy seat upon it that they were spoken by the Lord to Moses. "And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two

cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel."

In bringing before you the spiritual and experimental instruction contained in these words, I shall aim to dwell,

I.—*First*, upon "*the ark of the covenant*," both in its literal and spiritual meaning, and particularly upon "*the mercy seat*," which formed the lid, so to speak, of that ark.

II.—*Secondly*, upon the *promise* which God gives here, that "he would *meet with*" Moses, and, by implication, not only with Moses, but also with all who fear his name and worship him in spirit and in truth.

III.—*Thirdly*, upon the *gracious declaration* in connection with the promise, that "he would *commune with him*" from above the mercy seat."

IV.—*Fourthly*, that this communion should be upon *all things which God should give him in commandment* unto the children of Israel.

We have thus four leading objects proposed to our faith, if God enable me spiritually to open up the subject for your consideration this morning: 1, *The Ark of the Covenant* as a typical representation of *the mercy* of God in the face of his dear Son; 2, The *gracious Condescension* of the God of heaven and earth in *meeting with* his people at the mercy seat; 3, The *Communion* with which the Lord indulges them when they are brought there by the power of his grace; and, 4, The *Subjects* on which he thus graciously communes with them.

I.—We will first, with God's help, look at the ark of the covenant as directed to be made on the holy mount. We will examine it in various points of view, in order to show more clearly its typical character; what it spiritually represented; and what gospel truths it was meant, under a visible form, to prefigure.

i. The first thing which deserves our notice is *the purpose* for which it was constructed. It was intended to hold "the testimony," that is, the witness which God gave of himself in the law delivered from Sinai's burning top. "In the ark thou shalt put *the testimony* that I shall give thee." This "testimony" was so called as being God's witness, whereby he testifies of himself that he was a God of holiness and justice, for the two tables of the law written by the finger of God were standing witnesses of the covenant then made between God and his people. For the sake of their careful preservation these tables were to be laid up in the ark, it being constructed for the express purpose of receiving them in its bosom. "And I will write on the tables the words that were in the first tables which thou breakest, and thou shalt *put them in the ark*. (Deut. 10:2.) In the very object, then, for which the ark was constructed, we have, in type and figure, a blessed prefiguration of our gracious Lord, for he came for the express purpose of fulfilling that law; and that not only by an external but by an internal and perfect obedience to it. Thus we hear him speaking, "Then said I, Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart." The law of God, therefore, was in his heart, as the two tables of stone were *in* the ark of the covenant. It was absolutely necessary that the law should be fulfilled in every minute particular. It commanded perfect love to God and perfect love to man, and this obedience was to be rendered from the heart. Man could not render that obedience, for he

had not a heart to render it: he had lost in and by the fall both will and power. Yet that law must be obeyed, in order that the inflexible justice of God should be maintained without speck or stain, for without that perfect obedience righteousness could not be imputed or the Church justified. But as God is a searcher of hearts, and requires an obedience as holy and as perfect as the law demands, it could only be fulfilled by its being in the heart of a Mediator who, by the possession of a perfectly spotless nature, could think, speak, and act in the most perfect, unwavering love to God, and the most perfect, unwavering love to man. O glorious plan of justifying sinners doomed to die, righteously cursed, and justly condemned by original and actual transgression! How glorifying to God! how suitable to man! for "blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." (Rom. 4:8.) But in what consists this blessedness? In the imputation to him of righteousness without works; and how can this be, except being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus? (Rom. 3:24.)

ii. But let me now direct your attention to the *materials* of which the ark was constructed, for I think that we shall be able to see in them also a blessed typical reference to our Lord.

1. It was a kind of oblong chest, reducible in English feet to about the following dimensions: four feet four inches long, two feet nine inches broad, and two feet nine inches deep. Thus it was not very large nor conspicuous in size—apt figure of our Lord's lowly state when here below, as a root out of a dry ground, having, in the eyes of men, neither form nor comeliness.

2. Yet, though small in size, the materials were exceedingly *valuable*. It was made of "shittim wood." This was a tree of

great value, which grew in some parts of the desert of sufficient size to be cut into boards, for both the boards and the bars of the tabernacle were constructed of it; and so also were the staves of the ark and the altar of incense which stood in the holy place. This is the same tree as "the shittah tree," which the Lord promised he would plant in the wilderness, together with the cedar, the myrtle, and the oil tree; and is said by naturalists to be the same tree as that from which is now gathered the gum arabic of commerce. But, whether so or not, it had four peculiar properties, which made it suitable as an emblematic representation of the human nature of our blessed Lord. It was, 1, Exceedingly *durable*, so as to be almost indestructible by time, and thus aptly represented the durability of our gracious Lord, as wearing for ever and ever that human nature which he assumed into union with his divine Person. It was, 2, *Incorruptible* by the gnawing teeth of any insect or worm; and thus an apt representation of that sacred humanity which, even in death and in the grave, knew no corruption. 3, When worked up for use, it was exceedingly *beautiful* in grain and general appearance, admitting of a high polish, so as aptly to represent the beauty of that pure humanity of our blessed Lord on which the eyes of God ever rest with infinite satisfaction. And, 4, It was, when burnt, very *fragrant*, and thus aptly represented that holy human nature of our gracious Lord, which ever gave forth and still gives forth an acceptable odour, a sacrifice of a sweet smell, before the Lord of Hosts.

3. But, besides the shittim wood of which the ark was constructed, and which, as I have endeavoured to show, beautifully prefigured the pure humanity of our most gracious Mediator, there was an addition made to it which invested it with still greater and more conspicuous value. It was *overlaid with pure gold both* without and within, according to the

words of the Lord to Moses: "And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold; within and without shalt thou overlay it." (Exod. 25:11.) This pure gold I understand typically to represent *the Deity* of our most blessed Lord; and there were two features connected with this overlaying which seem to me to invest it with this emblematic character. 1. The pure gold was in the closest, most intimate union with the shittim wood, as overlaying it in every part within and without, and yet was utterly distinct from it though the union of both made but one ark. So Deity, represented by the gold, and the humanity represented by the shittim wood, constitute but one Person, the glorious Person of Immanuel, God with us. But, 2, as the pure gold was in itself intrinsically more precious than the wood, so the Deity of our precious Lord is intrinsically more precious than his sacred humanity. Yet who shall separate the one from the other, any more than the two natures of the Lord can be separated in their intrinsic, eternal union, or in time view of faith?

iii. But I have now to direct your attention to "the mercy seat," which, as I have before pointed out, was a kind of lid or covering of the ark. "And thou shalt make a mercy seat of pure gold; two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof. And thou shalt put a mercy seat above upon the ark." (Exod. 25:17, 21.) You will observe, therefore, that the mercy seat was of the same exact size with the ark, fitting it accurately and covering it from view; the word translated, mercy seat, meaning literally, "a covering," as concealing the tables of stone which were deposited in its bosom, and so typical of the covering of sin: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." (Ps. 32:1.) I have before shown that within the ark were deposited the tables of the law which the Lord gave a second time to Moses after he had broken the first; for we read that when Moses "reared up the

tabernacle in the first month in the second year on the first day of the month," that is, when they had been now in the desert for a year, "he took and put the testimony into the ark." (Exod. 40:17, 20.) This testimony was the two tables of stone like unto the first on which the Lord wrote the words that were in the first tables which he brake. (Exod. 34:1.) But we are told by an old Rabbinical tradition that the broken tables which Moses cast out of his hand upon the Mount, when, in a flame of holy indignation at seeing the calf and the dancing, he could no longer restrain himself, were deposited in the ark, as well as those tables which God subsequently gave them. Though it is but a tradition, yet there seem to be strong elements of truth in it, for we read no where what became of those broken tables, for though broken they still had been written by the finger of God, and thus in themselves were as holy as those which were unbroken. I think we have every reason then to believe that both were alike deposited in the ark, and thus were alike covered by the mercy seat; the eye of God, so to speak, being thus prevented from looking on the broken tables. If, then, the unbroken tables in the ark represented the fulfilment of the law in the heart of Christ, the broken tables, as covered by the mercy seat, represented the covering of our iniquities by the propitiation of Christ. "Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people; thou hast covered all their sins." (Psalm 85:2.)

iv. But there were some other circumstances connected with this mercy seat which demand a few moments' investigation, as casting a light upon the Mediatorial work of our blessed Lord.

1. Among these you will recollect that Moses was bidden to make "*two cherubims* of gold of beaten work," that is, not molten in a mould but formed with a hammer, and therefore

more solid as well its more beautiful and precious. These cherubims were placed upon the two ends of the mercy seat, and stretched forth their wings on high, covering it with them, and their faces looking to each other and to it. The cherubims, thus looking down upon the mercy seat, seem to represent angelic beings, according to the words of Peter: "Which things the angels desire to look into." (1 Pet. 1:12.) This view of the cherubims gives us a beautiful representation of the holy angels ever contemplating, and yet, with all their seraphic intelligence, unable fully to comprehend the mystery of salvation by the incarnation, sufferings, sacrifice, and death of their own Creator, the eternal Son of God. And this interpretation is confirmed by a remarkable passage in the Epistle to the Ephesians, from which we gather some insight into this heavenly mystery: "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Eph. 3:10, 11.) What beauty and glory do we see in this? What a contrast to the subtlety of the arch-fiend whom we have seen successfully plotting man's overthrow, and doubtless rejoicing with his accursed mates in the success of his scheme! God holds up in the mercy seat, as if before the eyes of the holy angels, his eternal purpose, and therefore only brought to light by the success of Satan in the fall, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord to exalt human nature in the person of his dear Son, and give him a bride in the church wherein and whereby he should be for ever glorified. The "principalities and powers in heavenly places" herein see "the manifold wisdom" of God. Thus the elect angels, confirmed in their standing by the incarnation of God's dear Son, have a part, and a blessed part, in this incarnation, not as redeemed by atoning blood, for redemption they needed not, but as gathered up into one family with the Church. "And having

made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven." (Col. 1:20.) And again, "Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." I cannot enter further into this subject, but I have said enough to show you why the two cherubims typify, as two heavenly witnesses and two personal representatives, the angelic host, as ever contemplating the mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God.

v. But you will also remember that the mercy seat had a peculiar connection with the *great day of atonement*. I cannot, therefore, pass by what was specially transacted on that solemn day, for on it certain rites were performed by the High Priest, all of which were of a typical character, and pointed not only to grand gospel truths, but had a spiritual and experimental bearing upon the work of God on the soul.

1. On that day, as being the solemn day of atonement, atonement was made in a special manner for sin. The high priest killed a bullock as a sin offering for himself and his house, and a goat for the sins of the people. When he had thus offered a sacrifice, he was to take of the blood of the bullock for his own sins and of the goat for the sins of the people, and carry it into the most holy place within the veil. But he was bidden to take "a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the brazen altar and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small." As he entered within the veil, and you will remember that he was permitted to do this only once a year, and that upon this solemn day, he sprinkled the incense beaten small upon the burning coals, and for this purpose, that the cloud of incense might cover the mercy seat and fill the most holy place with its sweet fragrance. Every part of this was highly typical and full of the sweetest instruction. The incense beaten small represented the bruised

body and soul of our blessed Lord; the coals of fire from the brazen altar represented the ever-burning anger of God against transgression and transgressors; the cloud of incense covering the mercy seat represented the mediation of Christ in connection with the propitiation made by him for sin: and the filling of the most holy place with the cloud of fragrant incense represented the present intercession of our great High Priest in the presence of God for us.

2. But, secondly, the high priest, when he went within the veil, entered, as the apostle speaks, "*not without blood*, which he offered for himself and for the errors of the people." (Heb. 9:7.) The command given him by Moses was, "And he shall put the incense upon the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is upon this testimony, that he die not. And he shall take the blood of the bullock and sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy seat eastward, and before the mercy seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times." (Lev. 16:13, 14.) All this was a typical and most blessed representation of the atonement for sin offered by the Son of God when he was made the propitiation for our sins. The blood represented the precious blood of the sacred humanity of the Son of God in intimate conjunction with his eternal Deity. It was sprinkled upon the mercy seat, to show the connection between the sacrifice which our blessed Lord offered for sin and the covering of transgression from the sight of God by his blood and righteousness. Its being sprinkled before the mercy seat seven times—a perfect number—represented the full remission of sin, the entire pardon and thorough blotting out of all the transgressions of the people of God. And its lying, as it were, continually upon the pavement in the most holy place from year to year before the mercy seat, represented that "blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel," and which, as sprinkled, so to speak,

upon the pavement of heaven, is ever interceding for the Church of God.

vi. One remark more I must make before I pass on to our second point, which is to observe that there was "a *crown of gold* made upon the mercy seat round about." (Exod. 25:11.) Only one other vessel of the tabernacle was so adorned, viz., the altar of incense, which was also made of shittim wood, and, like the ark, overlaid with pure gold. (Exod. 25:23, 25.) This crown of gold in both these instances seems to represent the royal crown which our blessed Lord wears as King as well as Priest; for he was to be "a priest upon his throne" (Zech. 6:12) and "a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec," which was a royal priesthood. (Heb. 7:1, 2.) You will observe that both the mercy seat, as being in the most holy place a type of heaven, and the altar of incense, represented the present intercession of Christ as now King and Priest. Nor was the table of shew bread without this golden crown as typical of the presentation of the people of God before his presence continually. But there was a peculiar propriety in the crown of gold being put upon both the ark of the covenant and the altar of incense, on which morning and evening Aaron was bidden to burn incense: "And shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning; when he dresseth the lamps, he shall burn incense upon it. And when Aaron lighteth the lamps at even, he shall burn incense upon it; a perpetual incense before the Lord throughout your generations." (Exod. 30:7, 8.)

II. But we will now, with God's help and blessing, direct our attention to our second point—the *gracious promise* that the Lord *will meet* with his people at the mercy seat, comprised in these words: "*There will I meet with thee.*"

i. In considering this gracious promise, I shall first direct your

attention to the *place* in which the ark of the covenant was put, as this circumstance throws great light upon its typical intention. You doubtless remember that in the tabernacle a veil separated the holy place from the most holy, and that in the most holy place the ark alone stood. But I will read to you God's direction to Moses: "And thou shalt hang up the veil under the taches, that thou mayest bring in thither within the veil the ark of the testimony; and the veil shall divide unto you between the holy place and the most holy. And thou shalt put the mercy seat upon the ark of the testimony in the most holy place." (Exod. 26:33, 34.) The most holy place represented in type and figure heaven, as is plainly evident from the language of the apostle: "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;" and again, "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession." (Heb. 4:14.) In heaven, then, in the immediate presence of God, is the mercy seat now set up. The old covenant decayed and waxed old, and is vanished away. (Heb. 8:13.) We have now, in the Son of God at the right hand of the Father, the true, the great, the only High Priest over the house of God; for he is passed within the veil; and where he is, there is now the mercy seat. It is of this the apostle speaks, when he says, "let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

But as another proof that the most holy place was a typical representation of heaven, we may observe that God in Scripture is often represented as dwelling between the cherubims. Thus, in the words of our text, we read, "And there I will meet with thee from above the mercy seat from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the

testimony." So the Psalmist prays, "Thou that dwellest between the cherubims shine forth;" and again, "The Lord reigneth: let the people tremble: he sitteth between the cherubims: let the earth be moved." (Ps. 99:1.) This dwelling of God between the cherubims is called sometimes the shekinah. The word, which means a dwelling or resting, has reference to the cloud of glory between the cherubims whereby the immediate presence of God was manifested. "I will appear," he says, "in the cloud upon the mercy seat." We do not read of any lamp or candlestick in the most holy place. No; it was not needed there; for as in the glorious city which John saw in vision, "the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb was the light thereof" (Rev. 21:23), so this shekinah, or cloud of glory upon the mercy seat, filled the most holy place with a glorious effulgence.

But let us now view the typical representations I have gone through, and see how they bear upon the mercy seat as now set up in the very presence of God by our great High Priest, who is risen from the dead, and is even now in the presence of God for us. His promise to Moses was, "There will I meet with thee." Moses is dead and the prophets. The ark of the covenant is dust; the golden mercy seat has perished, for it was capable of being lost or abused to vile purposes, being a corruptible thing. (1 Pet. 1:7, 18.) Where, then, would be the promise made by God unto our fathers if, when the literal mercy seat had passed away, there was now no longer a place of which God could say, "There will I meet with thee?" But thanks be to his holy name, as "we have an altar whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle" (Heb. 13:10), so we have now a mercy seat also, though the tabernacle, with all its vessels, and those who served it, have alike passed away. Our mercy seat is where our great High Priest is—in the heavens; and it is at and before that mercy seat that God and man still may meet. What a blessed view

is this for the eye of faith when it can look unto Jesus as thus ever interceding for us above!

Having, then, this mercy seat set up in the highest heavens, and Jesus continually presenting before it the fragrant incense of his intercession as ever rising from his body bruised and his blood shed upon the cross, we are invited by a whole cluster of gracious invitations and encouraged by a host of sweet promises to come and bow ourselves before it. There he has promised to meet with us now, as he did with Moses in the wilderness. This indeed is the only spot where God and a guilty sinner can freely meet; for there is the Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus; there is the blood of sprinkling; there the advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous; and there, and there alone, mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other.

ii. But, having taken a glance at this mercy seat in the highest heavens, let us now see how all this bears upon the experience of the saints of God; and to do so, we will take the child of grace at the very beginning of God's work upon his heart, and show how, from time to time, he is brought to the mercy seat, and that God meets with him there.

1. When the Lord is pleased to begin a work of grace upon the sinner's heart, he *convinces* him of sin, for without this he knows nothing really of his lost, undone condition, and therefore can have no sense of his need of mercy. What can he know therefore of a mercy seat? But together with those arrows of conviction, which never miss their aim but stick deep in his guilty conscience, the Lord almost invariably pours upon him a Spirit of grace and supplications. This is one of the first evidences of divine life, one of the first marks that God is about to bring him to the mercy seat. This is the fulfilment of the promise, "I will pour out upon the house of

David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and of supplications." (Zech. 12:10.) And what is the effect? "They shall come with weeping and with supplications will I lead them." (Jer. 31:9.) I know that such at least was the case with me; for when the Lord began his gracious work upon my heart, one of the first visible marks of the change was the receiving what I was before as ignorant of as the very beasts which perish—a Spirit of supplications. Until this be given, there may be a pouring in of convictions, but there is no pouring out of supplications; nor can we fulfil the gracious command, "Ye people, pour out your heart before him." We may have feelings and very deep feelings; convictions and very painful convictions; but there is no power to utter them before the throne unless the Spirit help our infirmities, and amongst them the infirmity of utterance, by himself making intercession for us according to the will of God. (Rom. 8:26, 27.)

2. Now when the Spirit of grace and supplications is given, it first vents itself in *confession*. Divine light makes the sinner see, spiritual life makes him feel, and heavenly grace enables him to confess his sins before a heart-searching God. Thus he comes with a burden on his back, but with divine life and feeling in his soul to the mercy seat, to the throne of grace, though he scarcely ventures to hope he may find mercy, and perhaps hardly knows the meaning of the word grace. But the Lord "leads the blind by a way that they know not;" and thus grace is secretly leading him on, for the Spirit of supplications is also the Spirit of grace, and brings him to that mercy seat where "grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life," and superabounds over all the aboundings of sin. How plainly we see this in the publican: "God be merciful to me a sinner," was his inmost cry. He had found a mercy seat, a throne of grace, in that temple which he seemed almost to defile by his presence, and there he came

with downcast eyes and throbbing breast. Nor were his supplications rejected, for his simple cry brought down into his bosom an answer of peace which sent him home a pardoned, justified, accepted sinner.

3. But as the Lord is pleased to lead his child on in his blessed ways of mercy and truth, he communicates *faith*, or, to speak more correctly, draws into exercise that faith which he bestowed in the first breathing of divine light and life into his soul. But in order to do this, he casts a divine light upon the way of salvation through the blood and obedience of his dear Son; and as the Lord works in a variety of ways this may be done in a different manner, and yet all lead to the same end. In some instances it is done in it moment; in others more gradually. And the way and manner differ as much as the time. A child of God is exercised and distressed about his state. How does the Lord send him relief? Some passage of Scripture is opened up to his mind and its hidden spiritual meaning discovered to him as he never saw it before; or, in the providence of God, he is brought under the sound of the gospel as experimentally preached, "which now becomes the power of God unto salvation;" or, in a most unexpected moment a ray of light suddenly shines into his heart, whereby he sees light in God's most blessed light; or he meets with some book in which the truth of God is clearly and spiritually set forth, and this is made a blessing to his soul. These are instances, but the Lord has various means of dealing with the hearts and consciences of his people; but however widely these may seem to differ, they all tend to the same end, to show salvation to the poor sinner through the blood of the Lamb. As, then, a ray of divine light shines into his heart, it directs him to the throne of grace, and there he finds unexpected liberty to pour out his soul before the Lord. This is the spot to which Job longed to come: "O that I knew where I might find him; that I might come even to his seat."

(Job 23:3.) And what did Job say he would do if he were enabled to come to God's seat? "I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments." (Job 23:4.) So the poor sinner whose case I am here describing fills his mouth with arguments. And of what nature are these? Chiefly twofold. His misery and God's mercy. Thus he tells the Lord what a sinner he has been and still is. But O, is there mercy for such? Can he indulge the hope that his soul may be saved? Knowing that there is forgiveness with the Lord that he may be feared, he then pleads hard that he may receive a sense of mercy into his breast. As he thus pleads, his faith sometimes seems, as it were, to now plume its wings; and as it is thus more sensibly drawn forth to embrace the promises, the invitations, the encouragements which the blessed Spirit sets before his eyes, he pleads more earnestly still for a manifestation of pardoning love; for this alone, he feels, can fully relieve his burdened, aching conscience. This favour is not then, perhaps, granted, but as a pledge and foretaste of it, the Lord is pleased to drop a sweet hope into his bosom. A comforting promise, a gracious intimation, a kind whisper, a friendly smile, a soft touch begins to move and melt his heart, and this raises up what the Scripture calls "a good hope through grace." We see much of this in Psalm 119., where David speaks again and again of "hoping in God's word:" "Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope." "My soul fainteth for thy salvation: but I hope in thy word." "Thou art my hiding place and my shield; I hope in thy word." (Psa. 119:49, 81, 114.) Now as this hope in God's word is thus raised up, it makes him more earnest still, gives him some firmer standing ground at the throne of grace, and puts more holy boldness into his heart and mouth. But by and by, as he still keeps at the mercy seat, the Lord gives him a sweet and precious revelation of his dear Son; makes Jesus, in a greater or less degree, known to his soul; holds up before his

eyes the King in his beauty; shows him the atoning blood; reveals in him the mystery of the cross, and sheds abroad his love in his heart. These fresh and clearer favours make him prize the mercy seat still more; for now he has stronger faith to believe, a firmer hope to anchor, and more fervent love to embrace the Lord Jesus; for all these graces of the Spirit are communicated at the mercy seat, that they may bring about a meeting between God and the soul that seeks him there; for God says, "I will meet with thee there." Thus as the fulfiller of his own promise, the God of heaven and earth can come and meet with a poor sinner at his mercy seat.

Whatever be his guilt and shame, whatever be the amount of his sins, whatever his darkness and bondage, doubt or fear, if a poor sinner be drawn by the Spirit of grace to the mercy seat, God is faithful to his word: he has promised to meet with him there and he does meet with him there. Thus every sweet access which the soul finds to God in prayer; every enlargement of heart before the throne; all power to wrestle and plead there with the Lord; every acting of faith, going up of hope, or embracing of love, all, all are due to God's promise, "I will meet with thee there."

Have you not been sometimes loaded with a heavy burden of sin, felt full of guilt and bondage, fear and confusion, and yet most undeservedly and most unexpectedly found sudden relief? Why was this relief given? Because God has promised, "I will meet with thee there." We are so blind and ignorant, always looking to ourselves to find something good there, not seeing that all the good is in God's dear Son, and that in him and from him all salvation is. Whatever be our sins in number or nature, he can be gracious in the Son of his love; he can show pity and pardon to guilty sinners through the blood of the cross. When, then, his Spirit draws sinners to his feet, then, according to his own words, he meets with them at the mercy seat on the footing of grace, on the ground of

mercy, through the blood and righteousness of his dear Son.

iii. But after a child of God has enjoyed something of the goodness and mercy of God revealed in the face of his dear Son, he may wander from his mercies, stray away from these choice gospel pastures, and get into a waste, howling wilderness, where there is neither food nor water; and yet though half starved for want, has in himself no power to return. But what has brought him for the most part into this state? Forgetfulness of the mercy seat; and as the Lord meets his people only there, a gradual estrangement from him. But in due time the Lord seeks out this wandering sheep, and the first place he brings him to is the mercy seat, confessing his sins and seeking mercy. Faithful to his own word, once more the Lord meets him there; and O, what a meeting! A penitent backslider and a forgiving God! O, what a meeting! A guilty wretch drowned in tears, and a loving Father, falling upon his neck and kissing him! O what a meeting for a poor, self-condemned wretch, who can never mourn too deeply over his sins, and yet finds grace superabounding over all its abounding, and the love of God bursting through the cloud, like the sun upon an April day, and melting his heart into contrition and love.

iv. But this is not all. The Lord is pleased sometimes to show his dear people the evils of their heart, to remove by his Spirit and grace that veil of pride and self-righteousness which hides so much of lost self from our eyes, and to discover what is really in us—the deep corruptions which lurk in our depraved nature, the filth and folly which is part and parcel of ourselves, the unutterable baseness and vileness so involved in our very being. Now this in itself would drive us from the throne of grace. "Can God dwell here?" is the sinner's feeling. "Can I be possessed of the fear of God when such thoughts and feelings overflow my mind, and seem to

fill me as if with the very dregs of hell?" Yet still he is drawn from time to time to the throne of grace to confess those sins before the mercy seat, for he cannot, dare not, stay away from it; and again God is true to his word "There will I meet with thee." There once more he reveals a sense of his mercy and goodness, and once more shows that, whatever the sinner be in himself, he is faithful to his own promise.

v. But again, take a view of the poor child of God suffering under various troubles and trials; see him burdened with many cares and sorrows, and trace the faithfulness of God in still making the promise good: "There will I meet with thee." Does not the Lord give his dear people encouragement in every trouble and difficulty, be it in providence or in grace, still to come to the mercy seat, still to pour out their hearts before him? "Trust in him," it says, "at all times; ye people, pour out your hearts before him: God is a refuge for us." "I sought the Lord," says David, "and he heard me and delivered me from all my fears. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles." But what various ways the Lord has to meet with his people at the mercy seat! Sometimes he meets them with a gracious word, which he drops in a most unexpected manner into their souls; sometimes by manifesting his presence without the intervention of any special word; sometimes by bestowing an enlargement of heart which gives a sensible token that his ear is open to their cry; sometimes by granting a marked answer to their prayers. The Lord ties himself down to no rule, time, or way of meeting with them at the mercy seat. Though he fulfils his promise, he fulfils it according to his own will; and yet the whole fulfilment is in the most perfect harmony with his written word, in the sweetest accordance with the teaching and testimony of the blessed Spirit, and suitable to the exact circumstances of those with whom he thus graciously deals.

vi. But what heart can conceive or tongue describe the blessedness of this heavenly truth that at all times, under all circumstances, and in all places there is provided a mercy seat, a throne of grace, at which the God of all grace and a sensible sinner may freely meet without let or hindrance, if indeed there be any spirit of prayer in the petitioner's breast? As no place, so no circumstance, is too dark for his eye not to see; as no covering is too thick, so no circumstance is too obscure for his sight not to pierce through: "Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord." (Jer. 23:24.) So felt the Psalmist: "If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee." (Ps. 139:11, 12.) By night upon our bed; by day in our various occupations; in the crowded streets or in the lonely fields; surrounded by the ungodly or in company with the Lord's people, we may, if the Lord the Spirit enables us, lift up a hearty sigh, utter a confessing word, and pour forth one simple desire. This may not to some seem to be sufficient to warrant the gracious fulfilment of the promise, "There will I meet with thee;" and yet every relief thereby obtained proves that it is so; for wherever, or whenever we get any sense of the Lord's presence or of the Lord's power, any intimation that his eye is upon us for good and his ear listening to our cry, be the prayer short or long, be it uttered on our knees or sighed out on our feet, be it in the quiet room or the bustling street, we have in it that evidence which each believer knows best in the sweet experience of it, that God does fulfil his own gracious word, "There will I meet with thee."

III.—But we pass on to our next point, the communion with

which the Lord there favours his people, *"I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat."*

1. In the tabernacle, as set up by Moses in the wilderness, God manifested himself visibly between the cherubims, which, as I have shown you, spread their wings over and upon the mercy seat. This visible presence of God is called sometimes the "Shekinah," which means literally dwelling, for God dwelt between the cherubim in the form of a cloud of glory, which covered the mercy seat. This was a type and visible representation of the glory of God shining forth in the face of Jesus Christ. On earth there is now no mercy seat, no mystic cherubim, no glorious Shekinah. These as types and figures have all passed away. But we have the glorious substance of them all in the heaven of heavens, where the Son of God sits in all the glory of the Father. Now, as God bade Moses come to the mercy seat under every difficulty, promising that he would "commune with him," so does he now invite his poor needy family to come under all circumstances to the mercy seat, for there he has promised not only to meet but to commune with them. These are not the same things, though they intimately belong to each other. Persons may meet but not speak; or one may speak and the other not answer. Neither of these is communion; for communion implies not only two parties meeting together, but mutually conversing one with another. Nay, it implies more than this. Strangers may converse together, but strangers do not commune together. To commune together they must open their hearts to each other, feel union with each other, and disclose, by word or deed, openly or tacitly, to each other the affection that dwells in the bosom of both. We know in a measure what communion is with the saints of God, which is, as it were, an index of a higher and more spiritual communion with the Lord. We may have, for instance, a dear friend, one whom we love in the Lord, one

with whom we have close union of spirit. Now when we can meet together and converse on the things of God in a spirit of humility and affection, with a mutual confidence in each other, we can tell one another the inmost feelings of our heart, and what we hope and believe the Lord has done for our soul. Heart meets to heart, and soul unites to soul, and with this there is communion of spirit. There must be no jar, no strife, no pride, no self-exaltation, in order that the union may be cemented by communion. Now take this in a higher sense. That the Lord may commune with us, we must be of the same mind; we must have the *same Spirit*; we must love the same things; and we must be able to tell each other the inmost thoughts of our bosom. Without this, or a measure of this, there may be prayer, so called, but there is no communion. In order to have communion with the Lord, we must be of one spirit with him; as we read, "He that is joined to the Lord, is one Spirit." (1 Cor. 6:17.) If then I have nothing of the Spirit of Christ in me, it is impossible for me to have any union with the Lord Jesus Christ, for I only have union with him through the Spirit. But if I possess his Spirit, the Spirit of God in me has union with the Spirit of Christ, as two drops of water running down a pane, or two drops of oil, or two drops of quicksilver meet together and melt into each other because they are of one substance. Water and oil mingle not; oil and quicksilver mingle not. But each meets with each, and melts into each other which is of the same nature. Thus if I am to melt into sweet union with the Lord, I can only do so by being a partaker of his Spirit; for "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." If, then, I am led to the mercy seat and my Spirit meets that of Jesus, my spirit meeting with his they melt into each other, and so far there is union and communion, and no farther.

2. But again, if we are to have real and spiritual communion with the God of heaven, with God the Father, God the Son,

and God the Holy Ghost—for all these three Persons of the Godhead meet at the mercy seat, and, in meeting at the mercy seat meet with us there, we must have the *same mind*, that is, our thoughts, ends, and purposes must be of the same character; for if God think one thing and I think another; if he intend one thing and I the contrary; if he regard his own glory and I am regarding mine, there is, there can be, no unity of mind between us. But unity of mind is indispensable to unity of spirit. Take it upon mere natural grounds. Look at a family, in which the head and husband is of one mind, the wife has, as it is sometimes called, a mind of her own, and the children as many minds as individuals, and each and all determined to have their own way. What union, what harmony, what happiness can there be in a family rent and torn like this? But when husband and wife are like-minded, and the children submit to their parents' united will and rule, then, and only then, is there family harmony. The Lord himself says, "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" (Amos. 3:3.) Thus, if husband and wife are pulling different ways; if one is spiritual and the other carnal; one all for grace and the other all for free will; one for Christ and the other for the world, union and happiness there can be none. So in grace: if we have not the mind of Christ, there can be no union or communion with Christ. But it may be asked, "What is it to have the mind of Christ?" It is as if to see with Christ's eyes, to hear with Christ's ears, to walk with Christ's feet, and to feel with Christ's heart. Just as much as we do this we may be said to have the mind of Christ; and just in proportion to the measure of it is there union and communion with him.

3. But a third ingredient is needful still—*love*. Love is the cementing tie, and is that peculiar tie which especially binds Christ and his Church together. Therefore the apostle says, "Above all those things put on charity or love, which is the

bond of perfectness:" that is the most perfect bond. It is love that brings people together, and love that keeps them together, for by love they are knit together to the Lord and to one another. There is no tie so strong, there is no union so firm, as the union of love. It is so in all the relationships of life. Husband and wife, father and children, brothers and sisters, relations and friends, are only united as they are united in love. So it is in the things of God. The union of love is the grand cementing bond between Christ and his Church. He loved her and gave himself for her, and she loves him because he first loved her and made that love known to her soul, as he himself speaks: "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee." But if we love the Lord we shall love also his people, his word, his will, his ways; in a word, shall love what he loves and hate what he hates. In the exercise of this love there is union with the Lord; and if we have union with him, then so far as that union is drawn forth it becomes communion, for communion stands upon union, and as it were grows out of it, as a tree from its roots.

But this union and communion can only be at, and from above the mercy seat. For whatever measure we may possess of the Spirit, or the mind, or the love of Christ, there will always be so much sin and corruption in us, that we shall always want the mercy seat as the place where this union is felt and this communion granted. Ever being in ourselves poor guilty sinners, we must have a view of the atoning blood sprinkled on and before it, before we can feel any holy boldness or any access unto God. The apostle, therefore, speaks of our "coming to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel" (Heb. 12:24); and tells us that we have "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." Our heart, then, has to be "sprinkled from an evil conscience," as the mercy seat was sprinkled

with the blood, that we may draw near with any confidence of being heard. (Hob. 10:19, 22.) If God ever commune with his people, it is only from above the mercy seat. So that whatever you may have of the Spirit, or of the mind, or of the love of Christ, these things in themselves, though they give union and communion, are never for a moment separated from the atoning blood of the Lamb of God, or from the mediation and intercession of the great High Priest within the veil. Thus none are admitted to communion with the Lord for their merit, and none excluded for their demerit; their righteousness gives them no title to draw near, and their sinfulness forms no real, though often a felt, hindrance to keep them back. At the mercy seat all the family of God are on a level. The aged father and the new-born babe, the convinced sinner and the rejoicing saint, alike meet here. Here all their differences cease, and here all their union begins.

But how does the Lord commune with his people from off the mercy seat? Communion, as I have pointed out, implies mutual intercourse, and an intercourse not only of thoughts but of words. The Lord then must speak to us as well as we speak to him. How, then, does he speak to us? By a voice from heaven? No; that is not his way. He speaks to us through his *word*, that written word which we hold in our hands. But does not the Lord speak to every one in the Scriptures? In a sense he does, for as the apostle speaks, "But I say, Have they not heard? Yes, verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the end of the world." (Rom. 10:18.) Of wisdom, too, we read: "She standeth in the top of high places, by the way in the places of the paths. She crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in of the doors. Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is unto the sons of man." (Proverbs 8:2, 3, 4.) But though the Lord thus speaks to the sons of men in his word,

it is really only his people who hear his voice. To them, therefore, he speaks peculiarly, if not solely, in his word, for to them he has given ears to hear. Thus he communes with them from above the mercy seat, sometimes by opening up his word to their understanding, as the Lord "opened the understanding of his disciples that they might understand the Scriptures" (Luke 24:45); sometimes by casting a ray of heavenly light upon the sacred page; by applying some sweet promise to their hearts; or by raising up faith in their souls to embrace in love and affection what he has revealed in the Scripture of truth. This is what the apostle calls "receiving the love of the truth to be saved thereby." (2 Thess. 2:10.) As, then, the Lord is pleased to shine upon the word, or through the word upon their heart, or to apply some precious promise to their soul, or bring some kind, encouraging testimony to strengthen their faith and hope, he communes with them from above the mercy seat. In this way the Lord communed with the two disciples journeying to Emmaus. They were communing together, but whilst thus communing Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But how did he commune with them but through the word, for "beginning at Moses and all the prophets he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself?" But what was the effect upon their hearts? They themselves shall tell us: "And they said one to another, Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and when he opened to us the Scriptures?" (Luke 24:32.) In a similar way now he communes with his people, and makes their heart burn within them by opening to them the Scriptures, for it is through his word applied to the heart with power that he reveals himself. He is the incarnate Word, and the Scriptures are the written word. Both have one name, "The Word of God" (Rev. 19:13); and thus through the written word the incarnate Word makes himself known to the soul.

iv. But not only does he make *himself* known through the written word, but through the same medium does he reveal his mind and will. See how he spake to Moses in the text, "I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, *of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.*" There was not a single commandment which he gave through Moses unto the children of Israel in which he did not commune with him from above the mercy seat. Moses was the typical Mediator, as we read of the old covenant: "It was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator." He, therefore, spake to Israel for God, and to God for Israel; for the people could not bear to hear the voice of God speaking from the terrible mount. Therefore they said to Moses, "Go thou near, and hear all that the Lord our God shall say: and speak thou unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee; and we will hear it and do it." (Deut. 5:27.) As this typical Mediator, then, Moses had liberty to speak to God for Israel; but only at the mercy seat. There he had liberty to bring his trials before the Lord and there to get his deliverance. Whatever difficulty, therefore, he might get into, or be entangled in beyond any solution by his own wisdom, the Lord promised him that when he came to the mercy seat he would freely commune with him upon it. The people brought their trials and difficulties unto Moses, and Moses brought them before the Lord. This we see running through all their history. Now have you not found your difficulties often, in a similar way, relieved in an unexpected manner at the mercy seat? You have come sometimes with very heavy trials, and you have found unexpected deliverance. The Lord communed with you of the things which he had given in commandment. He had commanded a trial to come upon you, a difficulty, or a temptation. You brought it to the mercy seat. He communed with you upon it. He did not perhaps take the trial off your shoulders: that still remains. But he made your will submissive to bear it; or if

still unremoved, supports you under it; or enables you to believe it is working for your spiritual good, and that you must bear it during the short time you will be in the wilderness; or is conforming you to the suffering image of the Son of God; or that for some unknown reason it is his will that you should be thus afflicted. We see this blessedly opened up in the experience of Paul with his thorn in the flesh. Thrice he brings it to the mercy seat. The Lord communes with him from above it, and speaks this word into his heart: "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." But what was the effect of this gracious word spoken from the mercy seat? "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me." (2 Cor. 12:8, 9.) When, then, the Lord answers prayer in this way, it gives us strength to bear trials and afflictions, and, under the influence of his Spirit and grace, we would rather walk in the path thus chosen for us by God than choose a path for ourselves; we would rather have the trouble and the Lord's support than be without the trouble and miss the support; sooner be chastened among the children than be let off with the bastards; sooner carry the cross than lose the crown; sooner have the rod than go short of the smile; and sooner enter the kingdom of heaven through much tribulation than have our portion in life and death with this ungodly world.

Is not, should not this be sufficient for us? What promise is there of happiness below the skies, or of anything in this world besides a deliverance from it? Whatever difficulties or perplexities, trials or temptations may distress the soul, if we are enabled by the help of the Spirit to come to the mercy seat and lay our burden there, if we do not get immediate relief, yet sooner or later the Lord will meet with us and commune with us, yea, answer us to the joy of our heart. And every past evidence that the Lord has heard and

answered prayer; every relief given in time of trouble; every intimation that he is gracious; every sweet hope in his mercy, are all so many encouraging testimonies that he will go on to perfect his work; will never leave us nor forsake us; will support us under every trial, and bear us up and carry us through even unto the end. It is in this way we learn to prize the mercy seat, and to bless the Lord for ever meeting us there.

I will not detain you longer, but will close the subject with two observations:—First, under all circumstances, at all times, and in all places, the mercy seat is free to us to approach. Secondly, that we are never really safe, except so far as we are found lying before it.