

The Promises Inherited through Faith and Patience

Preached at Keppel Street Chapel, London, on Thursday Evening, August 21, 1845

"That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." Hebrews 6:12

In the primitive Churches—I mean the Churches to which the epistles were addressed—there were prominent differences; that is, some of the churches were more abundantly blessed with the gifts and graces of the Spirit than others. For instance, the comforts of the Holy Ghost appear to have abounded very greatly in the Thessalonian church; and the gifts of the Holy Ghost, as distinct from his graces, appear to have been most prominent in the Corinthian church. The Galatians, on the other hand, we find deeply tinged with legality; the Colossians and Ephesians led more deeply into the mysteries of the gospel; and the Hebrews, to whom the Apostle Paul addressed this epistle, appear to have occupied a position of this nature—1. That they were very weak, timid, and wavering; and 2. That they were more beset by persecutions and severe trials than their sister churches in the New Testament. Now, there was a connection doubtless betwixt these two leading features of their character. They were persecuted chiefly on this account, that they were Hebrews. For that a Jew should renounce the religion of his fathers—that a Jew should profess faith in that Jesus whom his nation had crucified as a malefactor, was, in the eyes of his bigoted countrymen, the very essence of high treason against God and the Law. The Hebrews, therefore, appear to have borne the very brunt of persecution. They stood in the front of the battle. The thundercloud of trial burst immediately over their head. It was but the tail of the shower, so to speak, that fell upon the other churches; the

whole burst of the thunderstorm fell upon the head of the Hebrews. But they were weak and wavering. They had not received that power from on high whereby they were able to stand up against this storm of persecution that burst upon them. Therefore, we find the Apostle Paul, in various places through this epistle, endeavouring to trace out, and fortify them against, those evils which he saw most prominent in them.

There are two chapters in this epistle (the sixth and the tenth) that speak of the sin of apostacy from God, and hold out the most awful threatenings and warnings against those who apostatize from a profession of the truth, when once they have made a profession. These chapters have terrified and alarmed many of God's dear family, though I believe they have nothing to do with the Lord's own quickened and spiritual people; my own firm conviction being, that the characters pointed out in the sixth and tenth of Hebrews are not partakers of the grace of God, not real saints under the teachings of the Holy Ghost, but mere professors, with a name to live while dead. But, to my mind, there is much force and beauty in the very ambiguity that clothes these two chapters. It makes them more searching. Suppose the matters were as plain as ministers endeavour to make it; suppose we took away all the ambiguity that rests upon these fearful passages, we should take away their very force. It is because they come so close that they cut so deep. It is because they hold out such warnings and threatenings against a mere profession of truth, that they are specially adapted to search the heart and conscience of God's people. Thus, their very ambiguity is their very beauty; because, being so close, they cut the children of God more to the quick, they winnow away more of the dust and chaff of profession, they bring them more, in their feelings before the eyes of a heart-searching God, and they thus eventually

make the work of grace to be more clear and decided in their conscience.

But you will observe, if you read carefully this chapter, and if the Lord give you understanding to see the spiritual meaning of it, that the Apostle does not mean to include the Hebrews in these awful warnings. "Beloved," he says, "we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak." And then he goes on to trace out certain marks which they possessed, but which never, with all their splendid gifts, were to be found in apostates. He testifies to their work and labour of love; he speaks in the text of faith and patience; and lower down we find him tracing out in them the possession of hope: so that, being partakers of the graces of love, faith, patience, and hope, they, with all their timidity and wavering possessed in their hearts and consciences that which was saving, and that which everlastingly distinguished them from those apostates who had "crucified to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."

But the Apostle, knowing the tendencies of the human heart, that it is "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked," that its bias is to apostacy—that, like gravitation in nature, the heart of man is so bent upon falling, that fall it must except held up by the power of God—knowing the tendencies, the unalterable tendencies of the human heart by nature to depart from the living God, has interspersed this epistle with these solemn warnings; but at the same time has laid down marks of grace, so as not to discourage God's living family; sufficiently close to cause heart-searchings, yet sufficiently clear not to drive to despair; tracing out the line so clearly, as every minister should do, as not to discourage any who need encouragement, and yet to encourage none who need no encouragement. But seeing they were in this

timid, wavering state, he gives them the precept which this evening I shall endeavour to unfold—"That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

I shall endeavour to open, as far as the Lord shall enable me, the mind and meaning of the Spirit under two leading heads. I shall not dwell much upon the first clause of the text, but confine myself almost exclusively to the latter portion, and show *first, what the promises are; and secondly, how God's people inherit them through faith and patience.*

I.—But we will look a little first at the precept which the Holy Ghost has here given, "that ye be not slothful." The Lord's people are made diligent when he is pleased to work in their hearts with power. When he suspends his operations, when he does not bestow the dew and unction of the Spirit, they relapse into their own fallen, carnal nature. Now the Lord sends trials upon his people in order to stir them up. He knows that "the hand of the diligent maketh rich; but the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing." We cannot ourselves produce diligence. We may attempt it; we may counterfeit it; we may be full of fleshly zeal; but spiritual diligence is as distinct from natural diligence as Christ from Belial. But when the Lord would make his people diligent in every good word and work, it is instrumentally by sending trials, afflictions, and sorrows, so as to stir up his own blessed graces in their heart, and enable them to be fruitful in the exercise of that faith, hope, and love which are the gift of his own Spirit. And when the Lord is thus pleased to work in our hearts with power, we can no more be slothful than, when the Lord suspends his operations, we can be diligent. We can no more lie in sloth when the Lord is pleased to work in our hearts by his own blessed Spirit, than we can be diligent, earnest, begging, crying, seeking, and pleading with the Lord

when his gracious operations are not felt in our heart and conscience.

But to come to the latter clause of the text. There are promises that God has given in his word; in fact, the Scriptures are spangled with them. The stars in the sky are scarcely more abundant, and they scarcely shine with greater lustre than the promises scattered up and down God's word; and though the day will come when the sun will hide its light, and star after star will be extinguished, the promises in all their glorious fulfilment shall shine forth in inextinguishable light, for the word of God endureth for ever.

Now these promises we may class under three heads. There are promises temporal, promises spiritual, and promises of a mixed character—what, if I may compound a word, I may call temporal-spiritual. The Lord has given in his word many temporal promises; for he knew that his people would ever need them. He has "chosen the poor in this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom;" and having chosen them in the furnace of affliction, to walk for the most part in the path of tribulation, and to be hard and deeply pressed with many providential trials, he has laid up promises suitable to those situations of trial into which his own hand leads them. For instance, such a promise as this is of a temporal nature: "His bread shall be given him, and his waters shall be sure." (Isaiah 33:16.) Now all the Lord's family, so far as they are brought into various providential trials, have an interest in this promise. The Lord, again, has said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matthew 6:33.) These are two sweet promises: one absolute, "His bread shall be given." However it may be opposed by nature, sense, and reason; however, the depth of poverty may stare the poor child of God in the face; however unable to say whence the promised

help shall come; yet "bread shall he given him, and his waters shall be sure"—"food and raiment," as the apostle interprets it. The other, I will not say is conditional, but founded on the Spirit's work upon the heart; "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness." If we are enabled to seek first the salvation of our soul, that we may know Christ, and the power of his resurrection, all temporal things shall be bestowed as an additional gift.

But there are, as I have said, promises of a mixed character. For instance: "All things work together for good to them that love God." (Rom. 8:28.) That promise is of a mixed character; for "all things" include things providential, as well as things spiritual. If all things are to work together for your good, your temporal trials are included in "all things." Every bodily affliction, every family trouble, every thing that tries us in providence, every thing that is bitter and cutting to our flesh, as well as every thing spiritual and gracious is included in that comprehensive expression. Another promise of a mixed character, is, "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." (Psa. 50:15) The day of trouble is not limited to spiritual trouble, but it includes every kind of trouble. Art thou in temporal trouble? Is thy body afflicted? Art thou suffering in circumstances? "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will answer, and deliver thee." But also, if it be spiritual trouble, the promise still runs the same—"Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." So that the promise is not merely temporal, not merely spiritual, but of a mixed character, including both trouble temporal and trouble spiritual.

But there are other promises, which are given to the Lord's people, entirely spiritual, which have respect to their state and case as living souls. For instance—

1. There is the *promise of eternal life*. "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began." (Titus 1:2.) What a sweet feeling is raised up in the soul (I have felt it for myself) by the prospect of immortality! What a sweet text is that, 2 Tim. 1:9, 10, "Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began; but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." Our nature shrinks from annihilation. I have read of an infidel who on his death-bed even preferred an eternity of woe to actual annihilation—to ceasing to exist. There is a craving in the mind of man after immortality. No longer to be, to cease to exist, is repulsive to the mind of man. But when we can penetrate by the eye of faith into the realms of bliss, into the sanctuary of God, and believe that a glorious immortality awaits us, and when we drop our clay bodies, and become divested of the shell that hides the inner man of grace, our ransomed souls will mount up to be with Jesus, to see him face to face, and bathe in streams of endless bliss through the countless ages of eternity, there is something in the feeling unutterably glorious. There is something in immortality, a glorious immortality, an immortality of eternal bliss—there is something in the thought, when felt, when a confidence is raised up in the soul that we shall be clothed with immortality—there is something that feasts the heart with fat things, satisfies all the desires of the spirit, replenishes the sorrowful soul, and becomes indeed marrow and fatness to the believer, who longs not only to live, but to live for ever in the presence of his Lord.

2. Again; there is the promise of *pardon of sin*. "I will pardon whom I reserve." (Jer. 50:20.) And all the Lord's people

must have this promise sealed upon their heart in time, if ever they are to see Christ as he is in eternity. They never go out of this world in an unpardoned state; remission of sins is given by the Lord of life and glory, who is "exalted as a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." (Acts 5:31.) And every God-taught soul is in one of these two states—either enjoying, or having enjoyed, the felt application of the atoning blood of Jesus, giving him the pardon of his sins, or else hungering, thirsting, begging, pleading, and desiring to experience the sweet sensations in his soul which the pardon of sin brings.

3. *Preservation to the end* is another promise in the word of truth. "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5); "He will keep the feet of his saints" (1 Sam. 2:9); "Behold I and the children which thou hast given me." (Isa. 8:18.) Bringing the elect through every storm, setting all the ransomed before the throne of the Almighty for ever, deliverance from every temptation, escape from every snare, and complete salvation from every foe, are all secured to the heirs of promise in the word of truth. How needful this promise of preservation to the end is for the Lord's people to experience, when they discover what hearts they possess, and how perpetually they are departing from the Lord; when they see what they have to contend with from within and from without; when they know that an ever watchful enemy is perpetually endeavouring to ensnare, or to assail their souls; when they view the depth of nature's corruption; when the hidden evils of their heart are dissected by the keen anatomizing knife of the Spirit; when they feel leprous to the core, and know that they have no power and no strength to keep themselves from falling! How sweet, how precious, how suitable it is then to believe that they are written in the book of life, that their names are cut in Jesus' breast and worn on Jesus' shoulder, that he will preserve them to the end, and

bring them home through every storm.

4. *Supplies of grace and strength as they are needed*—according to the words, "As thy day is, so thy strength shall be" (Deut. 33:5)—is another promise most suitable to the Lord's poor, tried, and tempted family. Depend upon it, the Lord's family have to go to heaven through much tribulation. So says the unerring word of truth, and so speaks the experience of every God-taught soul. Now, in these seasons of trouble, in these painful exercises, in these perplexing trials, the Lord's people need strength; and the Lord sends these trials in order to drain and exhaust them of creature strength. Such is the self-righteousness of our heart—such the legality intertwined with every fibre of our natural disposition, that we shall cleave to our own righteousness as long as there is a thread to cleave to; we shall stand in our own strength as long as there is a point to stand upon; we shall lean upon our own wisdom as long as a particle remains. In order, then, to exhaust us, drain us, strip us, and purge us of this pharisaic leaven, the Lord sends trials, temptations, exercises, sorrows, and perplexities. What is their effect? To teach us our weakness, and bring us to that only spot, where God and the sinner meet—the spot of creature helplessness. Do you not see how this was shown in the experience of the Apostle Paul? how, after he had been caught up into the third heavens, had heard unspeakable words, and had his soul ravished with the most blissful revelations, he had a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him? Why was this? To teach him his weakness; was it not? Therefore, when he had been taught his weakness by it, he found the strength of Christ made perfect in that weakness, according to the Lord's own solution of that most painful enigma of Paul's heart. He then could use those wonderful words, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may

rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake; for when I am weak then am I strong. (2 Cor. 12:9, 10.) When he felt that just in proportion as all his own strength drained away, decayed, and became utter weakness, the strength of the Lord of life and glory was made perfect in his soul he could then glory in his poverty, in his weakness, in his nothingness, from feeling the blessedness and sweetness of the strength of Christ being made perfect in him. In order, therefore, to bring us to this spot, to know experimentally—and there is no other knowledge worth a straw—to know in our soul (and there is no other knowledge will stand in the day of judgment)—in order to know experimentally the strength of Christ, and feel it to be more than a doctrine, a notion, or a speculation—to know it as an eternal reality, tasted by the inward palate of our soul, descried by the eyes of living faith in the conscience, and felt as actually as anything we can palpably touch—in order to have this experience wrought into our hearts with divine power, we must be brought to this spot—to feel our own utter weakness. Now, when we are brought here, we are brought into the very situation that corresponds with the promise. To use a familiar figure, the promise and our condition is as the mortice to the tenon. The mortice is nothing without the tenon—the tenon is nothing without the mortice; but when the mortice and the tenon come together, and fit into each other, then there is a close joint. So spiritually. Here is the promise—that is the tenon; but if I have no place in my heart for that promise to enter into, there is no junction—it is like putting the tenon against a plank or a wall—there is no union. There must be a cut made—something that the tenon can enter into, before there is a junction. So spiritually, I must have such a work of grace upon my conscience, and be brought into that peculiar place in living experience to which the promise is adapted; and

when the Holy Spirit puts this promise into my heart, he not merely puts the tenon in, but cements it firm and fast by his own heavenly unction.

But time would fail me to gather even a few more ears of the rich harvest of promise in God's word. I could no more glean up the rich promises in the Bible than I could carry the produce of a whole field of corn upon my head. I must therefore pass on to the second of my discourse, which is to shew, how the Lord's people come to inherit the promises.

II.—Let us look a little into the expression, "inherit." I love, if the Lord give the wisdom, to dive beneath the surface, beneath the letter, into the vein of experience below. Look, then, at the word "inherit." It is a familiar figure taken from heirship, the right and title which the son has to his father's property. Now inheritance without possession is but a name. We sometimes hear of heirs presumptive, and of heirs apparent. But the heir presumptive is a very different thing from being the heir apparent. The heir presumptive may be entirely shut out of the property by the coming in of the heir apparent. Many people have what I call a presumptive inheritance. They are not the children of the heavenly Parent, but they stand in such a relation to God as Eliezer of Damascus stood to Abraham. We hear the complaint of the father of the faithful, "Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward (or rather, 'heir') of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?" (Gen.15:2.) Who was Eliezer? He was Abraham's servant, a faithful servant: but he had not sprung from Abraham's loins. But when the Lord gave Abraham Isaac, the heir of promise, what became of Eliezer of Damascus? Had he any right, any title, any inheritance when the son came? No; we read, "Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac;" (Gen. 25:5); while Eliezer had nothing but servant's wages, for he had nothing more

that he could claim. Now this is exactly the difference between servants in God's house and sons in God's house. Mere professors, who are not born of the Spirit, are not heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, but mere servants. But the true-born sons are children of the living God, members of the body of Christ, branches of the true vine, sheep of the good Shepherd, the Bridegroom's wife, the Spouse of the Lamb. These are the heirs, the true heirs, because they are inheritors by birth.

But there is a being put into a possession of the inheritance. The Apostle in the Epistle to the Galatians speaks, "Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all." (5:1.) There is such a thing then as a child of God being an heir, and yet being, in his feelings, in no way different from a servant; in other words, not yet put into a feeling enjoyment of the inheritance, not able to call God "Abba Father," not able to feel the Spirit of adoption in his heart, not able to come with holy familiarity to his heavenly feet. This is because the spirit of bondage and servility works in him unto death; perfect love has not been shed abroad in his heart to cast out fear, which hath torment.

But the Apostle in the text points out how we come to inherit the promises. Here they are in God's word. But will their being in God's word give me a title to them? Should I not be a madman, if, as I passed through the country at the rapid rate at which travellers now travel, I should lay claim to all the various lands that meet the eye? I remember well, when I was a boy, there used to be a woman who walked up and down every day before the Bank—perhaps some of you remember her—dressed in widow's weeds; and I believe she had this delusion in her mind, that all the money in the Bank belonged to her. That was her insanity. Are those a whit less

mad who think because the promises are in the word of God they have a claim to them? Let a man go into the Bank tomorrow, and lay claim to the money, the claimant would be seized by the police as a madman. Not a whit less mad are those spiritually, whatever verdict might be passed upon them by a commission of lunacy, who, without a title, venture to lay claim to the treasures laid up in God's word of truth.

There are two things, then, necessary to be wrought in a man's conscience by the Spirit of God before he inherits the promises; one is, *the grace of faith*—the other is, *the grace of patience*. "That ye be not slothful, but followers of them"—treading in their footsteps, in the good old paths that were cast up by the saints of old, the Old Testament worthies, who fought the battle, gained the victory, and now wear the crown—"that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." These two gifts and graces, then, of the Spirit are absolutely indispensable, that we may, in soul feeling, and in personal experience, come into the possession and enjoyment of the promises of God's word.

The first is, *faith*. There are two kinds of faith. There is faith natural, and faith spiritual; there is faith temporal, and faith the work of God upon the heart, which lasts all through the pilgrimage of the favoured saint until landed in glory. There is a faith that can move mountains, but utterly unconnected with the sister graces of hope and love. There is a faith which can do great things in the eyes of man; and yet only a delusion of Satan, a mere breath of nature. Now, that faith never can put us into possession of the promises. The promises are of a spiritual kind; they must therefore be laid hold of by a spiritual hand. A dead hand cannot handle the word of God so as to bring life and power into the soul. The

ancients used to put a piece of money into the hands of their corpses, to pay toll to Charon on coming to the infernal regions. But what sensation had that clay, cold hand of the money entrusted to it? So spiritually. If my hand be dead—if my faith, in other words, be not of divine operation—can I handle the living words of the living God? I need spiritual hands to handle spiritual things, I need spiritual eyes to see spiritual objects, I need spiritual ears to hear spiritual sounds, I need spiritual feet to walk in spiritual paths, I need a spiritual heart to embrace and love the truth as it is in Jesus. Thus, "without faith it is impossible to please God." We cannot realise any one portion of God's truth in our own experience without faith; and if we do not realize it there, it is but a name, but a notion, but a theory. It is the grand province of faith to receive what God gives, to receive it as from God, to receive it with simplicity, sincerity, humility, tenderness, contrition, hope, confidence. Do we not see this set forth and verified in the experience of the saints? Look at Abraham's faith. He is set forth in Scripture as the pattern of them that believe, as the father of the faithful. Was not Abraham's faith dependent upon the word of God? Did not God say to him, "Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them; and he said, so shall thy seed be." (Gen. 15:5.) Was not that promise laid hold of in Abraham's soul by the hand of living faith; and was not that imputed to him for righteousness? Now you will observe that Abraham's faith never wandered (shall I used the word?) into generalities. Abraham's faith was not like a bark committed to the wide ocean without sail, rudder, or compass. It had a certain point in view; it looked to one object, and one object only. It was like a well fitted ship upon the sea bound to one destination, sailing thither by a good chart, guided according to a certain preordained course. Abraham's faith was not wandering here and there, like a dismasted ship, through loose generalities; but it dwelt upon the word of God dropped

into his heart. He trusted it and relied upon that word, and felt in his soul the sweet experience of it. That faith God honoured; that faith God crowned by giving him the fulfilment of the promise which he himself had given.

Another mark of Abraham's faith was, that it was severely tried. He waited for the promise twenty-four years, amid the unbelief of his carnal heart, and every other obstacle which rose in the way. Now, if I am walking in the footsteps of our father; (and if we walk not in the steps of our father Abraham, we may call ourselves believers, but we call ourselves so in vain)—I say, if we walk in the steps of our father Abraham, our faith will be of precisely the same nature as our father Abraham's was. It will not be as strong. The Lord gave it to him as a pattern. Abraham's faith therefore was exceedingly strong; and Abraham's faith was exceedingly tried, because it was so strong. We shall not, then, have it so strong. I think the offering up of Isaac upon the altar was the greatest act of faith the world has ever seen, or will see, with one exception, and that is, the faith of the Lord of life and glory on the cross—the faith of Jesus Christ in his human nature. That was indeed the greatest faith the world ever saw, or will see. But next to that, the type and figure of it—the offering up of Isaac by his father—seems to be the greatest exploit of faith the world ever witnessed, or ever will witness. Your faith, then, will not be as strong as Abraham's was; but still you will walk in the same footsteps as Abraham; and if this be the case, your faith will deal with the word of God just in the same way as Abraham's faith dealt with the word of God. Did not Abraham's faith restrict itself to one certain definite promise, cleave to it, hang upon it, rely upon it, trust in it, venture upon the faithfulness of it? Our faith, if like Abraham's, will be exactly similar. The Lord said, in the days of old to his bitter enemies, the Pharisees, "My word hath no place in

you." That was the mark of unregeneracy. To use my former illustration—there was no mortice for the tenon—no empty, no broken, no humble, no tender heart for the word of God to come into. And the Apostle, speaking of the Old Testament Hebrews—those of them who were not the Lord's people—says, "The word preached did not profit them;" and he tells us why—because "it was not mixed with faith in them that heard it." In other words, they heard the gospel preached; but not having faith mixed with it, turning it into a living reality, so as to mingle with it, and receive it in all its blessed fulness, it did not profit their souls.

If our faith, then, be like Abraham's it will not be dealing with loose generalities. We shall not read a chapter of God's word, and have faith upon every verse; but we shall believe simply what we receive into our heart and conscience. Does God speak to our soul? Does he whisper a word or two to the conscience? Does he apply a promise with his own divine savour and unction? Does our eye see, our ear hear, our heart feel any portion of God's word? Is it sweet and savoury? Does it drop like honey and the honeycomb? Does dew, savour, unction, and power attend it? Immediately that takes place, faith springs up in the soul, embraces it, realizes it, mixes with, enters into the beauty of it, and eventually is honoured with the full enjoyment of it. I will endeavour to illustrate this by a figure. My eye is formed to see objects—my ear is formed to hear objects—my hand is formed to touch objects. Now, as my eye sees, as my ear hears, as my hand touches, certain sensations are produced in me. These sensations produce ideas. If I look out into infinite space, I see nothing—my eye receives into it no object. In the dead season of night, when all is still, my ear hears nothing. In stretching forth my hand into the air, I touch nothing. Must not the eye, must not the ear, must not the hand have an object before each sense can act? So spiritually. Faith is the

eye of the soul, faith is the ear of the soul, faith is the hand of the soul; for faith sees, hears and touches. Now if there be no object, faith cannot see any more than the eye can see; faith cannot hear any more than the ear can hear; faith cannot touch any more than the hand can touch. But when an object comes, the eye sees, the ear hears, the hand touches, and sensation is produced. So when Christ appears, his blood felt in the conscience, his love is received into the heart, and his righteousness revealed; faith is raised up in the soul. But if these objects of faith are not revealed, we can no more see them than we can touch the stars. If these objects be hidden or absent, though I may have faith as a grace in my soul, it will lie still and dormant till the object comes before it.

Now all that the Lord drops into your heart with power—all that you see of beauty and glory in Jesus—all that your soul flows out after in tender affection as to the living God—all that your conscience embraces—all that encourages, softens, impresses, revives, humbles, melts out of God's word—faith receives, mixes with, feeds upon, enjoys, turns into nutriment, digests, and issues forth in the fruits and graces of the Spirit. The word of God is, if I may use the illustration, as food; but do we not need a stomach to receive it? You may put the word of God into a spiritually dead stomach, as the ancients put money into the dead man's hand, and it corrupts there with the corrupt corpse. So the word of God, put into a dead man's stomach does but increase his corruption, turning the doctrines of the gospel into licentiousness. Those good doctrines which in a living stomach turn to good food, and nourish the whole frame, in a dead stomach, are like good food in a corpse, which corrupts and rots in the corrupt and rotten body. We want, then, living faith in the soul, in order to receive this spiritual food. Now, thus it is that we find many of the Lord's people who

are doubting, fearing, perplexed, exercised, tempted, have living faith, while many who think they have great faith have not a solitary grain. It is this which keeps them down that they dare not say they are what they are not. They dare not lay claim to anything that God does not give. They can only feed upon such things as the Lord puts into their hearts. But presumptuous professors can draw comfort from every promise and every doctrine, without knowing anything of their blessed bestowment by God the Spirit. So that, if we look at what faith is and what faith does, we shall often find in the heart of a poor trembling sinner, who will perhaps almost cut himself off as not having a grain of faith in his soul, the grace of God in active operation, while others, with high-sounding names, great pretentious, and strong confidence, are dead in unbelief and infidelity.

2. But there is another way pointed out, and that closely connected with the other, by which we become inheritors of the promise—*patience*. What is patience? It means waiting, endurance. Was not this the case with Abraham? "So after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise." Now, my friends, wherever the Lord gives faith he tries that faith. What says the Apostle Peter? "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. 1:7.) It is "the trial of faith," not faith itself, that is "precious." The trial of faith is eminently precious. Wherever true faith is in the soul it must be tried. This trial is the trial of patience. It is the trial of faith which proves its reality. It is the fire that burns away the dross; the fan that winnows away the chaff; the water that drowns presumption.

Now patience is necessary in order to prove the genuineness and reality of faith. The Lord generally—I may say

invariably—does not accomplish his purposes at once. He usually—I might say almost invariably—works by gradations. Is not this the case in creation? Do we see the oak starting up in all its gigantic proportion in one day? Is not a tiny acorn committed to the ground; and is not the giant oak, whose huge limbs we admire, the growth of a century? Men and women are years growing up to their full stature. So spiritually, "He that believeth shall not make haste." Faith in the soul is of slow growth for the most part; for the Lord takes care that every step in the path shall be tried by the perplexities and difficulties that surround it. And he has appointed this that it may be a means of distinguishing the faith of God's elect from the faith of those who have a name to live while dead. They apostatize and turn away from the faith. Like the stony ground hearers, they believe for a time, but in temptation fall away. The various hindrances of nature, sense, and reason, sin, the devil, and the world get the better of them; thus they turn back, often give up all profession of religion, and die in their sins. But the Lord's people cannot so die. Their faith is of a lasting nature, because what God doth he doth for ever. Thus their faith stands every storm and endures for ever.

This, then, is the use, this the end of patience—that it enables the soul not only to plead, to beg, and to cry, but also to wait. Its work is to believe against infidelity, hope against despondency, trust in God in spite of nature, sense, and reason—look to God in the dark—hope in God when hope is well nigh lost, when the waves and surges of despair beat upon the head. Thus there is need of patience on the one hand, and of faith on the other, to inherit the promises. Faith is necessary as the hand of the soul to lay hold of them; patience is necessary to wait for their fulfilment. Faith is necessary to give us soul possession and soul enjoyment of the glorious realities of God's truth; patience is necessary to

prove to ourselves and to others that we are really partakers of the faith of God's elect.

Now this is the way in which we inherit the promises. O how different from the way of man's devising! O how different from what is usually preached up as the way to come into the possession of them! Persons would fain try to teach us that all we have to do is to take God's word, read this and that promise, and implicitly believe, and lay claim to, and enjoy it. Was that Abraham's faith? Was that David's faith? Was he not hunted upon the mountains, with his life in his hand? Was that the faith of Jesus, who learned obedience through suffering? Was that the faith of the ancient worthies—"those who subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness," &c.? Was their faith of this easy, slipshod nature whom John saw with palms in their hands? Did they not wade through seas of tribulation till they came to that blessed land where the palms of victory are in their hands, and the songs of triumph in their mouths? Are you and I to get to heaven by an easy path, while they went theirs by a rough one? How, if shame could enter heaven, we should blush and hang down our heads with shame, as we stood by the side of the suffering heroes, who had waded there through seas of trouble. There is no getting to heaven without tribulation. I do not define (who can define?) how long the trial, trouble, or temptation shall last. But if we walk not in a path of trial, tribulation, temptation, exercise, and sorrow, what do we know of the promises?—what do we know of the sweet enjoyment of the promises? We have to inherit them through faith and patience; and depend upon it, if you are ever to enjoy them here in their sweetness, and hope to enjoy the blessed fulfilment of them hereafter in the realms of eternal bliss, we must be "followers of them who through faith and patience inherit these glorious promises."